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# THE
# EARLY NARRATIVES OF GENESIS

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THE

# EARLY NARRATIVES OF GENESIS

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF GENESIS I.-XI.

BY

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ὅσα γὰρ προεγράφη, πάντα εἰς τὴν ἡμετέραν διδασκαλίαν ἐγράφη.—Rom. xv. 4.

*Per fidem ad intellectum.*

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TO MY WIFE

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# PREFACE

THE doubts and questionings to which the *Early Narratives of Genesis* have frequently given rise are well known to those who have any acquaintance with the religious difficulties of our own time. They, indeed, have been fortunate in their experience who have not known an instance in which antagonism or indifference to religion has been fostered by the rigid refusal, on the part of well-meaning Christian parents and teachers, to admit the possibility of an alternative to the traditional interpretation of this portion of Scripture.

Groundless as the supposition was, that a Christian when he reads the Book of Genesis must either renounce his confidence in the achievements of scientific research or abandon his faith in Scripture, it was, at one time, as widely prevalent as it was mischievous and false. Happily, in the present day, such a monstrous perversion of Christian freedom has long since disappeared; and it is generally, at

least tacitly, acknowledged, that if Biblical exegesis fails to march with the intellectual progress of the age, the Church of Christ will pay the penalty by forfeiting her hold upon the intelligence of those to whom she ministers.

None, I suppose, who think and read for themselves, can for one moment doubt, that the triumphs of discovery in the domain of Natural Science, during the last half-century, have strongly and deeply, though silently, been influencing the thoughts of thousands of devout Christians in reference to the opening chapters of Genesis. And there are not wanting signs that the interpretation of the Assyro-Babylonian inscriptions and the recognition of the province of Biblical Criticism have, in different ways, contributed to intensify this influence.

It is most true, and it is good to be reminded, that Science is never stationary. We are far indeed from hearing the last word upon the great problems of Natural Philosophy, Assyriology, and Biblical Criticism. Still, enough has been firmly established, for all human purposes, to make it impossible that the exegesis of Genesis, if it is to be a living force, should remain where it was a century ago. What is now known, may not be perfect knowledge. But it were pure madness not to make a reverent use of our partial knowledge.

The old position is no longer tenable. A new

position has to be taken up at once, prayerfully chosen, and hopefully held. The period of transition, the period of anxious suspense of judgment, is drawing to a close. It is seen and felt that the interpretation of Holy Scripture is not less literal, not less spiritual, not less in conformity with the pattern which the Divine Teacher gave, when it is rendered more true to history by the fiery tests of criticism and literary analysis.

Some there are who gladly avow their belief that Scripture and Science are not at variance, yet are loth enough to make use of Science as God's gift. But, undoubtedly, it must be the maxim of all reverent exposition to treat Science as the friend and not as the foe of Divine Revelation. It may be that Science seems to be but a disappointing friend when it shows the path of traditional interpretation to be no longer practicable. But the utterance of truth is the proof of purest friendship; and Science, if it closes one way, guides us to another which hitherto has been hid from view.

The present volume consists of eight papers based on a course of Lectures delivered at Cambridge in 1890-91. They are reproduced with a few slight alterations from the *Expository Times*, to which Magazine they were contributed at the request of its kind and energetic Editor.

The object with which they were written was to discuss the contents of the opening chapters of Genesis, in a simple and untechnical style, with special reference to the modifications of view which the frank recognition of the claims of Science and Criticism seems to demand.

The reception which the papers have met with in various quarters has encouraged me to consent to their appearance in a separate volume. I have thought it better to ask the reader kindly to make due allowance for the form in which they originally appeared, than to attempt the task of recasting them in a different mould.

HERBERT E. RYLE.

CAMBRIDGE, *Aug.* 2, 1892.

VIA EST DEI LEX; META GLORIA EST DEI.

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# CHAPTER I

## THE CREATION

THE national history of Israel may be said to date from the era of the Exodus and the Covenant of Mount Sinai. The beginnings of the Hebrew race are described in the narrative that tells us of the call of Abraham and records the selection of the family with which are identified the names of the three great ancestors of the chosen people.

But the Hebrew narratives, and the traditions from which our Book of Genesis was compiled, went back into ages infinitely more remote. It was natural for the Hebrew historian to preface his record of the origin of the chosen people with a record of the origin of all nations, the origin of the human race, and the origin of the universe. The materials for such a preface were to hand. He has placed them before us in their simplicity and beauty, making selections from his available resources, so as to narrate in succession the Hebrew

stories of the cosmogony, the primæval patriarchs, the Deluge, and the formation of the races.

The fact that we have in these eleven chapters a narrative compiled from two or more different sources is now so generally recognised, that there is no need here for any preliminary discussion upon the subject. It only needs to be stated, that the two principal threads of tradition, incorporated in the opening section of Genesis, are termed by scholars "Jehovistic" and "Priestly," according as they correspond respectively with what may be called the "Prophetic" and "Priestly" treatment of the early religious history of Israel.[1] But besides these larger and more easily recognised sources of information, the compiler obviously makes use of other materials of which the archaic character is evident both from the style and from the subject matter.

The Creation of The Universe (i. 1-ii. $4^a$).—The matchless introduction to the whole history is taken in all probability from the Priestly writings, having been either composed by the Priestly Narrator,

[1] The literary analysis of Gen. i.-xi. according to Canon Driver, is as follows:

Jehovist, ii. $4^b$; iii. 24; iv. 1-26; v. 29; vi. 1-4, 5-8; vii. 1-5, 7-10 (in the main), 12, $16^b$, 17, 22, 23; viii. $2^b$, $3^a$, 6-12, $13^b$, 20-22; ix. 18-27; x. 8-19, 21, 24-30; xi. 1-9, 28-30.

Priestly, i. 1; ii. $4^a$; v. 1-28, 30-32; vi. 9-22; vii. 6, 7-9 (in parts), 11, 13-$16^a$, 18-21, 24; viii. 1, $2^a$, $3^b$-5, $13^a$, 14-19; ix. 1-17, 28, 29; x. 1-7, 20, 22, 23, 31, 32; xi. 10-27, 31, 32.

(Driver's *Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*: Edinburgh, 1891; 4th ed. 1892.)

or extracted by him and edited from the ancient traditions of which the Priestly guild were the recognised keepers. Evidence of this is obtained from characteristic words and phrases, and from the smooth, orderly, and somewhat redundant style. Time was when this opening passage was regarded as the most ancient piece of writing in the Bible. This can no longer be maintained. The smoothness and fulness of its present literary garb show sufficiently that, however ancient its narrative may be, the form in which it has come down to us does not belong to the earliest stages of Hebrew literature.

The recognition of this fact would in itself be fatal to the acceptance of various forms of traditional opinion respecting the origin of Gen. i. 1-ii. $4^a$, or, indeed, of the whole section, Gen. i.-xi. We may here notice, in passing, the strange, yet commonly held, view that the story of the creation of the world was supernaturally revealed to Adam, and that from him it was transmitted word for word through the families of Enosh and Shem, of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, until it was finally received and committed to writing by Moses. This is an instance of the extraordinary delusions to which popular assent has been given, in cases where direct evidence has not been forthcoming. Ignorance can always call imagination into play, and support its utterances by appeals to the supernatural. But its Nemesis is inevitable. And, in this instance, as soon as philological science

disposed of the old assumption that Hebrew was the primitive language, the assumption upon which the theory of an infallible oral tradition was originally based, and indeed has logically rested, the bubble was pricked. There is no longer now the necessity to expose the futility of a theory consisting of a series of hypotheses that could never be substantiated. There is no longer the necessity to object that we cannot presuppose an orderly and comprehensive tradition in the earliest ages of humanity. There is no longer the necessity to raise the preliminary question, whether we are entitled to assign to the first forefathers of the human race intellectual gifts capable of comprehending, preserving, and transmitting by memory, a description of the origin of the universe, so exquisite in its simplicity, so marvellous in its dignity, so profound in its philosophy.

The argument from the style of the Hebrew, in the beginning of Genesis, is almost equally opposed to the other common assumption, that it is the record by Moses of a Divine Revelation to himself respecting the origin of the universe. It cannot be admitted that the style of this passage suggests the beginnings of a Hebrew literature, or that it has any marked resemblance to those portions of the Old Testament which are indubitably archaic. We have no evidence or warrant for the assertion that Moses received Divine Revelation upon this topic. It is an unfortunate and precarious method of interpretation

that endeavours to substitute a theory of direct superhuman intervention for the explanation dictated by literary criticism. The latter, because it follows the guidance of analogy in other literature, is not on that account less loyal to the recognition of the work of the Holy Spirit.

We are nowhere told that Moses received Divine information respecting the beginnings of the universe. And while there are good reasons for not introducing anywhere a theory of direct supernatural agency, where none is recorded in Scripture, there are, among others, two especially good reasons, in the case of the opening chapters of Genesis, for refusing the application of such a theory.

1. We do not expect instruction upon matters of physical inquiry from Revelation in the written Word. God's other gifts to man, of learning, perseverance, calculation and the like, have been, and are, a true source of Revelation. But Scripture supplies no short cuts for the intellect. Where man's intellectual powers may hope to attain to the truth, be it in the region of historical, scientific, or critical study, we have no warrant to expect an anticipation of results, through the interposition of supernatural instruction, in the letter of Scripture.

Nor is it any sufficient answer to plead that, whereas we should not look for Divine instruction in matters of physical inquiry or in the ordinary paths of life, we might reasonably look for it in

matters so transcending our intellectual capacity as those relating to the creation of the universe. For, on the one hand, we have no right to assume from our present stage of ignorance, that the things relating to the formation of the earth and of the planetary system are necessarily beyond the range of human cognisance. The horizon of physical research is constantly widening. We are every year learning more, both of the infinitely remote and of the infinitely vast and minute in time and space. On the other hand, we have no right to assume that, in things distinct from the spiritual and moral life, the letter of Scripture is endowed with omniscience. Scripture is Divinely inspired, not to release men from the toil of mental inquiry, but to lead and instruct their souls in the things of "eternal salvation." In regions of thought within the compass of earthly cognition, the books of Scripture reflect the limitations of learning and knowledge, which were inseparable from human composition in their own sphere of time and place.

2. The analogy presented by the literature of other nations would lead us to expect that, in the delineation of the formation of the world and of the beginnings of the human race, the simplicity of the narrative would be no guarantee for the scientific accuracy of the story. We cannot exempt Israelite history from the criticism which we should apply to other literature. The Hebrew cosmogony

is, for reasons which we shall have to notice further on, conspicuously free from absurdities which detract from the beauty of similar narratives in other literatures. It is not, however, upon any literal interpretation, scientifically accurate; nor, indeed, should we expect it to be, if we were prepared to grant the family likeness of its contents to those of the Assyro-Babylonian cosmogony. It is a mistaken notion of reverence to endeavour to extract accurate science from the Book of Genesis by means of a process of exposition which we should not think of applying to the primitive traditions of other races, to the text of Egyptian hieroglyphics or of the cuneiform inscriptions.

I am acquainted with numerous, and some of them brilliant, attempts to "reconcile," as it is wrongly termed, "religion and science." But no attempt at reconciling Gen. i. with the exacting requirements of modern sciences has ever been known to succeed, without entailing a degree of special pleading or forced interpretation to which, in such a question, we should be wise to have no recourse.

In examining the character of this section (Gen. i.-ii. $4^a$), let us not hesitate to place it upon its proper footing. Its character can only be estimated by comparison with the parallels presented in other literature. Every nation and race has had its cosmogony or legendary account, respecting the

origin of the world and the early days of the nation's ancestors. Traditions of this kind are found in every variety. Each variety represents tribal intermixture, or the influences of climate and environment. The infancy of races is only capable of understanding abstract ideas by means of simple and pictorial representations. Upon these the genius of each race has left its characteristic impress, sometimes poetical, sometimes whimsical, sometimes philosophical, sometimes religious.

If now we treat the Israelite cosmogony as inseparable in its main features from such representations, what do we find? Let us search and see.

We employ in our search the two Divine forces of knowledge—the perfect Revelation of things spiritual in the person of Jesus Christ, and the progressive Revelation of things material, through the gifts of the Holy Spirit, to the intellect of mankind. The narrative, upon which our search is employed, relates to three distinct conceptions, upon the determination of which the current of all religious thought and conduct depends. These are the conceptions of (*a*) the physical universe, (*b*) mankind, and (*c*) the Godhead.

It appears to me that our judgment upon the character of the Israelite cosmogony should be based upon the treatment in Genesis of these three fundamental conceptions.

(*a*) *The Physical Universe.*—It would not be

difficult to show that the Hebrew cosmogony is closely allied to other early cosmogonies in its imperfect and, as we should term it, its unscientific conception, both of the formation of the earth and the heavenly bodies, and of the production of the vegetable and animal world. It is, for instance, only a non-natural interpretation, which considers the "days" of Gen. i., in spite of the mention of "evening" and "morning," to be vast periods of time.[1] It is, again, only a non-natural interpretation, which explains the formation of the sun and the moon on the "fourth" day as intelligible to modern science, on the assumption that the nebular hypothesis is anticipated, and that Gen. i. 14-16 describes not the *formation* of the heavenly bodies (see, however, ver. 16), but the first *manifestation* of their orbs through the mists that had before hidden them from the earth.

If, as seems to be the only candid line of exegesis, we adopt a genuinely literal interpretation, and then are constrained to admit the presence of statements incompatible with modern scientific discoveries, we shall, at least, show a resolution to be above all things and at all costs fair. We shall follow with especial interest the points of correspondence in the cosmogony of Genesis with that of the nations closely akin to the Israelites. But we shall also concede that the Hebrew description of the physical universe is unscientific as

[1] *See* Chapter II.

judged by modern standards, and that it shares the limitations of the imperfect knowledge of the age at which it was committed to writing.

On the other hand, from the religious point of view, we should not fail to recognise the pure and elevated conception of the Material Universe which is presented to us in this portion of Genesis. Not self-existent nor Divine, as some taught in early days, not inherently evil nor antagonistic to God and man, as others taught, the Universe is presented to us as coming into being at the will of a Divine Creator, its formation following the stages of an ordered development, its essential character being pleasing and good. It is a picture which, if it clashes with exact science, agrees in its highest conceptions with the teaching of the purest philosophy of religion.

(*b*) *Mankind.* — The description of man's origin and nature, in the cosmogony of Genesis, is of great importance. It is viewed, as it were, from two aspects, the physical and the spiritual, the earthly and the divine. So far as his physical origin is touched upon, the narrative is expressed in the simple terms of prehistoric legend, of unscientific pictorial description. We feel that so far as his physical origin and his material structure are concerned, the advances of modern physiological research are more likely to furnish a key to the great mystery than are the pages of Genesis. But,

when we pass from the consideration of man's physical structure to the consideration of him as one endowed with spiritual powers, moral duties, and intellectual gifts, we are lifted at once into an atmosphere, where we find that every item of the description is marvellously and perfectly in harmony with the highest religious conception of man revealed to us in the teaching of the Incarnation. We see him made in the image and likeness of God; a living soul derived from the Divine Spirit; gifted with powers of intellect, with freedom of will, with the witness of conscience. It is as if, with the passage from the physical to the spiritual region, we had left the atmosphere of "childish" things, and had been exalted to the contemplation of mature "men" whose "citizenship is in heaven."

(*c*) *The Godhead.* — Even more strikingly does this exaltation of conception appear, when the subject is wholly spiritual, or almost wholly so, as it is in the description of the Godhead. The only exception here arises from the anthropomorphic language incidental to the presentation of the narrative. But the Divine pre-existence, the Divine omnipotence, the paramount purpose of love, the infinite hatred of sin,—these and other attributes of the Divine nature are depicted in the narrative, in a degree that immeasurably elevates the traditions of Israel above all similar records in the known literature of other nations.

Does not this summary of an investigation, into the details of which we have not space here to enter, assist us towards a conclusion, which will recognise the combination of the two essential elements in the inspiration of all Holy Scripture, the human form and the spiritual teaching? In these early chapters of Genesis there is present the simple narrative of the cosmogony, current in the Hebrew branch of the Semitic race. But this is not all. There is also present the teaching of the Spirit, for the revelation of which the Israelite people were the appointed channel, that, through them, it might be made known among men. If now the three fundamental conceptions—the world, human nature, and God—be regarded as divided into two groups, (1) the physical (*i.e.* the world and man's physical origin and nature) and (2) the spiritual (*i.e.* man's spiritual origin and the Being of God), we can discern that the secular, the childlike, the imperfect teaching of Genesis upon the former group is co-existent with, nay, furnishes, as we may almost express it, the literary vehicle for the religious thought, for the inspired and inspiring Revelation, for the Divine teaching, of Genesis in regard to the latter group.

We have, then, in the first chapters of Genesis the Hebrew version of a great Semitic epic dealing with the beginning of all things. It has not come down to us in that earliest form in which, we may assume, it was known to the fathers of the Israelite

race who "dwelt on the other side of the flood," [1] and "served other gods" (Josh. xxiv. 2). It has not come down to us in that setting of bewildering mythology, in which we find the similar and congenital Assyro-Babylonian tradition embedded. It has come down to us in the form which it has received from the minds of devout Israelites, moved by the Spirit of God, and penetrated with the pure belief in the spiritual Jehovah. The saints and prophets of Israel stripped the old legend of its pagan deformities. Its shape and outline survived. But its spirit was changed, its religious teaching and significance were transfigured, in the light of the Revelation of the LORD. The popular tradition was not abolished; it was preserved, purified, hallowed, that it might subserve the Divine purpose of transmitting, as in a figure, spiritual teaching upon eternal truths.

[1] R. V. Your fathers dwelt of old time beyond the river (*i.e.* the Euphrates).

## CHAPTER II

### THE ASSYRO-BABYLONIAN COSMOGONY AND THE DAYS OF CREATION

THE subjects of discussion in the present chapter are the relation of the Hebrew to the Assyro-Babylonian cosmogony, and the interpretation of the Days of Creation. It would be impossible to compress an adequate treatment of topics of such magnitude within the narrow limits to which I must confine myself. Completeness is out of the question. My aim is only to present, with as much clearness as possible, the line of interpretation which results from the principles laid down in the previous chapter.

### I.—*The Assyro-Babylonian Cosmogony*

We might easily be beguiled into a path that would lead us far away from our immediate purpose, if we attempted to examine the relationship of the Hebrew narrative of the Creation to the similar

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narratives preserved in the religious literature of other races. To the student of Comparative Religion the task involved in such an inquiry is one of peculiar fascination. The field of research is wide and constantly widening. The workers in it are as yet few; the work itself has only in recent years been set on foot. To the Biblical student such investigations cannot fail to be helpful and suggestive. They serve to gather together into a focus those gleams, whether of the true perception or of the surviving recollection, of The Light, which seem to be the common heritage of all races, and which help to remind us that God left not Himself without a witness among the nations of the world. In spite of this, however, the results of a comparative study of the cosmogonies of the races would only indirectly assist us in the interpretation of Gen. i.-ii. 4. It will, therefore, suffice to be reminded, at this point, of the endless variety of picture in which the problem of the origin of the universe has received a solution from the religious conceptions and from the poetical imaginations of races so varied as Indians and Etruscans, Germans and Egyptians, Norsemen, Mexicans, and Greeks.

But in the religious literature of Assyria and Babylonia we find a cosmogony which, in some respects, stands in a different category from those of the races just mentioned. From whatever point of view it is approached, its direct

bearing upon the narrative of Gen. i. must be admitted, and account taken of it. It offers us another representation of the story of the Creation, preserved in the literature of another branch of the same great Semitic family from which the people of Israel sprang. The points of resemblance between the Assyro-Babylonian and the Hebrew narratives force themselves upon our notice: and, it must also be allowed, the points of their dissimilarity are not less obvious. Whatever estimate be formed of the Assyro-Babylonian tradition as a whole, its Semitic origin, the antiquity of its documentary history, the degree of its approximation to the Genesis narrative in some points, of its divergency from it in others, constitute reasons that cannot be overlooked for including a notice of its chief characteristics in any careful interpretation of this passage of Scripture.

Until quite recently our knowledge of the Assyro-Babylonian cosmogony was derived from the fragments of Berosus, the Babylonian historian (circ. 250 B.C.), which are preserved in the writings of Josephus, Syncellus, and Eusebius; and from allusions that are made to it in the works of the Neo-Platonist Damascius (circ. 530 A.D.). Into these representations of a Babylonian cosmogony it used to be thought probable that a good deal of a comparatively recent, exotic, and, in particular, Hellenic, growth had been grafted.

But the success of the late eminent Assyriologist, George Smith, in deciphering the cuneiform inscription on the mutilated fragments of what are now sometimes called the Creation Tablets, threw an unexpected light upon the Babylonian legend. These precious fragments had been brought to the British Museum along with other treasures of the famous library of Assurbanipal (668 - 626 B.C.), excavated at Kouyunjik. The date of Assurbanipal is, comparatively speaking, late. But the contents of his library probably reproduced the traditions of a very much earlier time. There is good reason to suppose that, even if the tablets themselves were inscribed so late as in Assurbanipal's reign, the narrative which they contain has been derived, if not actually transcribed, from the Babylonian religious literature of a vastly more ancient period.

The form in which it was committed to these tablets was that of a great epic poem. Its contents are now widely known through the pages of such works as Sayce's *Fresh Light from the Ancient Monuments*, Schrader's *Cuneiform Inscriptions and the Old Testament* (translated by Prof. O. C. Whitehouse), and *Records of the Past* (edited by Sayce), 2nd series, vol. i. pp. 122-153. About one-third of the poem is still missing, but the general outline of the narrative is unmistakable. It describes the Creation as taking place in seven creative acts. These are recorded

in seven books or tablets, of which the second and sixth are wanting. From the first tablet we learn that in the beginning there existed only "watery chaos" (*Tiamat*), out of which sprang the primal gods, Lakhmu and Lakhamu, then Ansar and Kisar, the upper and lower firmament, and then the Assyrian gods, Anu, god of the sky, Bel, or Illil, god of the spirit-world; and Ea, god of waters. The third and fourth tablets record the creation of light, which was represented in the victory of Merodach, son of Ea, god of light, over Tiamat, while out of the skin of the slaughtered Tiamat was constructed the wide expanse of the heavens, the dwelling-place of the Assyrian gods. The fifth tablet tells how the sun and moon and stars were implanted in the sky, and received divine command to regulate the succession of times and seasons, of days and years. The sixth tablet, which has not yet been found, must have recorded the formation of the earth and the creation of the vegetable world, of birds and fishes. The seventh and last tablet tells how the cattle and the larger beasts, and all creeping things, were made. Unfortunately the latter part is much mutilated, and the description of the formation of man has not survived.

In spite of the wholly different setting which is here given to the story of the Creation, "the Assyrian epic," to quote Professor Sayce's own

words, "bears a striking resemblance to the account of it given in the first chapter of Genesis. In each case the history of the Creation is divided into seven successive acts; in each case the present world has been preceded by a watery chaos. In fact, the self-same word is used of this chaos in both the Biblical and Assyrian accounts—*tehôm*, *Tiamat*,—the only difference being that, in the Assyrian story, "the deep" has become a mythological personage, the mother of a chaotic brood. The order of the Creation, moreover, agrees in the two accounts: first the light, then the creation of the firmament of heaven, subsequently the appointment of the celestial bodies "for signs and for seasons, and for days and years," and next the "creation of beasts and creeping things" (*Records of the Past*, 2nd series, i. 130).

On the other hand, the points of difference are equally conspicuous. In the Assyro-Babylonian account the creation of light is the result of a conflict between a deity and chaos; in Genesis it is called into being by the word of God. In the Assyro-Babylonian account the heavenly bodies are allotted their place before the formation of the earth; in Genesis the dry land appears before the sun and moon and stars are set in the sky. In the Assyro-Babylonian account the seventh "tablet" is occupied with a description of creative work; in Genesis the seventh day is a day of rest. Most

striking of all is the contrast between the polytheism of the Assyro-Babylonian account and the majestic simplicity of the monotheism of Genesis. In the Assyro-Babylonian account, gods as well as universe emerge from pre-existent chaos, and the work of creation proceeds by the triumph of divine power over the forces of matter inherently evil. In Genesis, God (*Elohim*) creates whatever has come into being by the utterance of His will—all is from the beginning His handiwork, and in its essence is very good.

Before we endeavour to determine the relation of the Hebrew to the cuneiform narrative, it is important to mention the existence of yet another cosmogony brought to light in the fragments of two tablets which had also belonged to the library of Assurbanipal. These were copied from even older sources obtained from Cutha in Babylonia, which Professor Sayce conjectures can hardly have been later than 2350 B.C. In the Cuthaean legend we have no account of an orderly succession of creative acts. The children of Chaos or Tiamat who dwelt underground are destroyed by Nergal, the god of Cutha, and after their overthrow he creates the children of men.

Placing the two cuneiform legends of the Creation side by side, we should be inclined to surmise that, in remote times, there existed in Assyria and Babylonia several varying traditions respecting the

Creation; but that, in later times, under the influence of a more systematic theology or a more philosophic religion, the various legends received a final form in the grouping of the seven tablets of the Creation; the number "seven" being probably selected because it was a holy number in Assyria.

What, then, are we to say as to the relation of the Hebrew to the Assyro-Babylonian cosmogony?

In the first place, it did not originate the Assyro-Babylonian narrative: of that we may be confident. For the earlier legend that was current before the days of Abraham bears no resemblance to the Genesis cosmogony, while the later one, which does resemble the Genesis cosmogony, seems to have originated in a period when Hebrew religious thought could not conceivably have influenced Assyrian.

In the second place, the Assyro-Babylonian may have originated the Hebrew cosmogony; and, if so, would have given rise to it, either (*a*) directly and at a recent time, or (*b*) only indirectly and ultimately. (*a*) Certain critics have of late advocated the former alternative. They call attention to the fact that, with the exception of Exod. xx. 11, the references to Gen. i.-ii. 4, to be found in passages of undoubtedly pre-exilic date, are few and disputable; and they conjecture that the Jews brought back from their exile in Babylon this form of the Assyrian cosmogony adapted to their own religious use. The

evidence for this supposition appears to me, so far as I have been able to form any judgment upon the matter, to be quite insufficient. Even apart from considerations of literary criticism, the great improbability that the pious Jews of the exile would ever have adopted the Creation narrative of their hated heathen captors is almost sufficient in itself to condemn the theory.

(*b*) On the other hand, the probability that the Genesis cosmogony is *ultimately* to be traced back to an Assyrian tradition may be reasonably admitted. The ancestors of Abraham were Assyrian; whether dwellers in Northern Assyria or in Babylonia itself, need not here be discussed. The various Creation legends current in Mesopotamia would presumably have been preserved in the clan of Terah, and have been transmitted from generation to generation.

If now our supposition is correct that the Assyrian Creation story of the Seven Tablets indicates, by its more orderly grouping, an age more developed in religious thought than the Cuthaean version, it is reasonable to suppose that a similar and almost parallel process may have taken place in a stock which was an offshoot from Mesopotamia, and which was privileged, in things religious, to receive the guidance of the Divine Spirit in so superlative a degree. If so, the cosmogony of Gen. i.-ii. $4^a$ may reflect the process of systematisation, to which the primitive traditions of the Hebrew race were sub-

mitted at a comparatively late period in the history of the nation. Thus the early traditions of the Semitic race were yoked to the service of the spiritual religion of Israel. The essential teaching of Jehovah respecting the Divine nature, the universe, and man's nature, was conveyed in the outline of a cosmogony, which, if it had its roots in the early Assyrian traditions, was finally expressed in all the dignified simplicity of Hebrew monotheism.

## II.—*The Days of Creation*

According to this explanation, the Days of Creation in the Genesis cosmogony are to be understood as literal days; for as such they seem to be intended in the simple Hebrew narrative. At the same time, the spiritual teaching is obvious. The lesson underlying the mention of those seven days is that of the law of ordered progress which characterises the dealings of the Divine Creator with created matter. The literal interpretation of the Days of Creation is thus compatible with the spiritual, their origin in popular tradition with their consecration for emblematical instruction. The simple narrative is made the vehicle of Revelation respecting the things of the Spirit. But the seal of inspiration affixed to it does not alter the original character of the narrative, nor transform the imagery

of the Israelite cosmogony into absolute canons of physical science.

I am well aware that those who have looked for scientific teaching in Gen. i. have not failed to find it. They may be divided into two main groups according as they apply to the "Days" of Creation a literal or a metaphorical interpretation.

There are not probably many nowadays who would maintain, as once it would have been regarded as profane not to maintain, that this passage of Scripture, literally understood, contains a scientific account of the processes of Creation, which occupied six literal days. Since the time when this view prevailed, the Book of Divine Revelation in Nature has been opened more widely and studied more deeply. The writing in that volume has been readily and reverently received by Christendom. Christian thought now gladly welcomes the teaching of the geologist and the astronomer. It recognises as the truth, that, according to the working of the Omnipotent Creator's will, gradual change throughout infinite ages must have been the process which governed alike the evolution of sidereal systems, the moulding of the earth's crust, and the appearance of the animal and vegetable kingdoms upon its surface.

If, then, it was still to be supposed that Gen. i. definitely instructed us in science, some other interpretation of "the days" than the old literal one had

to be found. The very discoveries of physical science suggested a solution. If "the days" were understood not as literal days but as infinite ages, or as vast periods in the development of the earth's formation, then it seemed as if the threatened contradiction of Scripture and science might be averted, and as if the words of Genesis might receive unexpected confirmation from the testimony of science. Accordingly, the metaphorical interpretation of "the days" found very general favour. Scholars and men of science have sought to show, how, with allowance for the exigencies of poetic language, the statements of the opening chapter of Genesis may be brought into comparatively close agreement with even the most recent results of scientific inquiry.

But just as, in the earlier phase of interpretation, it was found that, by starting from a literal interpretation, a collision with scientific facts could not be avoided, so now, in the later phase, it is an objection that, starting from the facts of science, it has been necessary to have recourse to a forced or, at any rate, a non-literal interpretation. In a passage of striking simplicity of language, it is impossible not to feel an uncomfortable suspicion that it cannot be right to attach a non-literal explanation to just that one single word, the *literal* meaning of which happens to be a stumbling-block in the way of the desired method of exegesis. And, surely, the doubt, whether this non-literal explana-

tion of "the days" can be correct, will be intensified in the mind of any one who also considers, that the proposed explanation could never have suggested itself to the ancient Israelite, and would never to-day have been mooted, but for the discoveries of modern science.

But even the acceptance of this interpretation fails to satisfy fully the demands of scientific facts. To mention but one single instance, the formation of the heavenly bodies on the fourth day is utterly unscientific: it is at variance with what we, through science, know to have been the actual order of creation. The assertion, that not the formation but the first manifestation of the heavenly bodies, through the mists that encompassed the earth, is indicated in Gen. i. 14, is an explanation of the difficulty too unnatural and forced to merit serious attention.

The endeavour to maintain the scientific accuracy of Gen. i. entails a choice between a natural literal exegesis which defies modern discoveries, and a non-natural metaphorical exegesis which is introduced just on account of these modern discoveries, and in order to meet the apparent necessity of their claims.

The alternative principle of interpretation which is here preferred is free from both these disadvantages. It is embarrassed by no such dilemma. It starts with the assumption that the Divine Revelation gives us instruction on things spiritual, not on things of natural science. We are then ready, indeed

we expect, to find in this fragment of ancient Israelite literature instances of collision with the results of modern science. They mark the interval between the intellectual attainment of the Israelite and the degree of precision obtained in our European learning. The whole passage must be understood as the writer presumably wrote it and his countrymen presumably understood it. To him, as to his countrymen generally, "the days" were literal days as much as "the heavens" were literal heavens and "the light" literal light.

If, then, we are asked what the scientific value of the chapter is, our reply must be, "As much or as little as impartial men of science recognise in it"; certainly, we should say, less than what it was once reputed to contain, but very possibly more than is now commonly attributed to it. In fairness, too, we should grant that, whatever scientific value it possesses, it shares in some measure with the congenital Assyrian tradition, and indeed, though in a less degree, with any analogous cosmogonies, which agree with the Genesis account so far as to assert, that the world was made by the exercise of a Supreme Power, that the process of Creation followed an ordered sequence, and that the creation of man marked the highest point in the scale of created being.

We may gladly acknowledge what has often been claimed for this portion of Scripture, that no other

known cosmogony approaches it in its capacity of adaptation to, and even of actual correspondence with, the discoveries of modern science. But were it possible that the well-known difficulties of "the days," the formation of the heavenly bodies, the priority in Creation of vegetable to animal life, and of birds and fishes to reptiles, could be successfully met; were agreement with science a thousand times closer than it is asserted to be,—it would fall far short of reconciling us to the thought of the inspiration of Scripture being made the medium of scientific instruction. Paradoxical as it may sound, faith would, I believe, be more genuinely staggered by any perfectly exact agreement in Genesis with the wonderful discoveries of modern science than it ever has been, or is ever likely to be, by the familiar contradictions with science that are to be expected in a literature so ancient, and are to be found in this chapter, according to any literal interpretation.

As a matter of fact, however strongly apologists have pleaded for the "scientific" interpretation of Gen. i., their faith in Christianity has not been affected by the question. People have not lived in any real dread, lest fresh discoveries in science should upset their belief in the reality of Divine Revelation. It has been instinctively felt that the true conception of inspiration was not affected by the advance of material knowledge. The intuitive recognition of the human element in Scripture

enabled men to perceive that progress in the knowledge of physical laws constituted no encroachment upon the domain of the spiritual. The readjustment of interpretation satisfies the claims of reason and belief. The primitive Hebrew tradition is made, through the Divine Spirit, the first step in the stairway of Divine Revelation.

The chief apprehension that has been felt has rightly related to the belief in inspiration. And I venture to plead that the line of interpretation suggested in this and the previous chapter, instead of degrading the doctrine, safeguards it from an unworthy and mechanical conception. Popular opinion is tempted to confuse inspiration with the passive receptiveness of religious ecstasy. From the introduction to St. Luke's Gospel, and indeed from the character of both historical and prophetical books of Scripture, we infer that the contents of books of Scripture are the result of patient labour and arduous research, overruled for the Divine purpose and guided by the Holy Spirit. The inspiration which, we believe, breathes through the varied and often secular material of Scripture, selected and collected, *e.g.*, in the chronicles of old times, in bare genealogies, in laws of ritual, in popular sayings, breathes too in those early narratives which in Hebrew, as in other literature, lie at the back of the more strictly historical records.

The common type which the Hebrew shares with

the Assyrian cosmogony is patent. But, differing from the Assyrian in this respect, the Hebrew narrative has descended to us distinguished by a sobriety, dignity, and elevation communicated to it by those whose spirit had been schooled by the Divine Teacher. Its simple story was dignified to be the messenger of profoundest truths.

On every side from which ideas respecting God and the universe were capable, in those early days, of mean or idolatrous degradation, the Israelite version of the Creation epic is fenced about. Did other nations believe in the pre-existence of matter? Israel received the doctrine of the pre-existence of God. Did they regard matter as essentially evil, or as needing to be vanquished by the Deity? Israel learned that there was nothing created which God had not created in its essence good. Had the worship of the heavenly bodies become a common form of misleading idolatry? Israel learned that they were themselves the handiwork of God, and served the supreme purpose in the ordered succession of His creative work. Did some regard man's nature as the offspring of a lower emanation or of some subordinate divinity? Israel learned that man was made by the Most High in His own image and in His own likeness.

However much the Hebrew narrative may transcend in verisimilitude the teaching of other cosmogonies in matters of human cognisance, its form is

but the shell and husk of the Divine Message. The eternal truths conveyed in the spiritual teaching of the chapter, are infinitely more precious than any possible items of agreement with the present aspects of so changeful and progressive a study as that of the physical laws which interpret the Creator's Will.

# CHAPTER III

## THE STORY OF PARADISE

We come now to the consideration of the second section in the Early Narratives of Genesis which seems to offer itself for separate treatment. In these two chapters (ii. $4^b$-iii. 24) the narrative falls naturally into two divisions, of which the first (chap. ii. $4^b$-25) is occupied with a description of the creation of man, his first dwelling-place, and the formation of the vegetable and animal world; the second (chap. iii.) narrates the account of the Temptation, the Fall, and the Judgment consequent upon it.

I shall do little more than touch upon some of the more important points to be noticed in the literary structure, origin, and religious teaching of this important narrative.

(*a*) *Structure.*—Many a reader has been surprised to notice that a description of the Creation occurs in the second chapter, when the successive stages of the Creation have already formed the theme of the

previous passage. According to the explanation that has generally been given, the double narrative is intended to furnish an account of the same events regarded from different points of view. And, undoubtedly, in the first chapter, the Creation is described in its relation to the Physical Universe, the formation of man marking the concluding feature of the whole; whereas, in the second chapter, it is described in its relation primarily to Man, each portion of the universe being called into existence in order to contribute to the benefit of the human race. No one would contest the existence of this difference of view in the two descriptions, nor the possibility of the same writer describing the same events in different ways. But the divergence of view is not sufficient to account for the absence in chap. ii. $4^b$-25 of any reference to the Days of Creation, nor for the statements which differ so widely from the contents of chap. i., as in ii. 5-7, where we read that when man was made neither plant nor herb yet existed; and in ii. 8, 9, 19, where it appears that the vegetable and animal world owed its origin to the purpose of satisfying the needs of man; and in ii. 21-23, where we find that the formation of woman as a helpmeet for man was an act of Divine favour in recognition of his inability to find true companionship in the brute creation. Now, it may fairly be said, we certainly do not expect that a writer who is going a second time over the same

facts for the purpose of describing them from a different standpoint, will refrain from any hint of his change of purpose, will give no sign that he is conscious of going over the same ground, and will make no allusion to his first narrative. This, however, is what we find on a comparison of Gen. ii. $4^b$-25 with Gen. i. 1-ii. $4^a$.

Moreover, as Hebrew scholars have pointed out, the peculiarity of a double narrative, emanating, on the traditional view, from a single writer, strangely coincides with a change in the style and diction. For, although the change in the use of the Divine Name, from "Elohim" to "Jehovah Elohim," has been accounted for (but with insufficient reason) on the ground of a change in the general attitude of thought, the alteration both in the literary style of the narrative and in the choice of words and phrases has been conclusively demonstrated.

Modern criticism has removed the difficulty. Scholars have proved—and men of all schools now recognise — that this section (ii. $4^b$-iii. 24) is not homogeneous with chap. i.-ii. $4^a$. The compiler of Genesis has here incorporated material from another source, to which the name of "Jehovist" has been commonly given by critics.[1] The first portion of Genesis, as has before been mentioned, belongs to the "Priestly" group of writings; the second section is derived from the Prophetic group.

[1] *See* page 2.

The style of the former is formal and methodical; the style of the latter is varied, full of incident, and replete with descriptive details and personal allusions.[1]

The compiler of Genesis selects from two recognised Hebrew traditions parallel extracts descriptive of the work of Creation. He places them side by side, so that we are able to compare their different characteristics. This plan of selecting from different sources he pursues in other portions of the history, and we shall have occasion to observe a noteworthy example in the double account of the Deluge, where he has pieced together extracts from the two main sources of the Israelite narratives.

The fact that the compiler makes no attempt rigorously to harmonise them illustrates his method of work. He had no desire to obliterate the characteristic features of the writings out of which he constructed his continuous narrative. His sole object was to furnish his countrymen with an authoritative narrative, which should preserve the traditions of his race at the same time that it was the means of embodying the essential teaching of the Religion of Jehovah.

(*b*) *Origin.*—It is not perhaps to be wondered at, that an inquiry into the origin and growth of the Paradise narrative should be involved in much obscurity. It is certainly strange that no reference is made to it in the writings of the earlier Hebrew

[1] The reader may refer to Driver's Introduction, or to an article by Rev. H. F. Woods in the *Expository Times* of February 1891.

prophets. The garden of Eden is alluded to by the prophets of the Captivity, *e.g.* Ezek. xxviii. 13, xxxi. 9, Isa. li. 3. A mention of it occurs in the Book of Joel (ii. 3), but the age of that work is much disputed, and no conclusive evidence as to pre-exilic usage could be drawn from it. The Book of Proverbs, in the occasional mention of the "tree of life," very possibly contains allusions to our narrative. But any other early reference to it is so meagre, and, at the best, so doubtful, that we are compelled to infer, either that the Israelite narrative was hardly known before the Exile, or that the form in which it has come down to us was not generally known, or, at least, was not in early times recognised as a portion of sacred tradition.

The former of these alternatives has been somewhat hastily adopted by some eminent scholars. The narrative of the Fall, they have asserted, received its literary form after the Captivity; the narrative itself was derived from Babylon. With this conclusion I find myself quite unable to agree. For, apart from the consideration mentioned in the previous paper, that the captive Jews were little likely, and the pious members of the community least of all, to enrich the sacred traditions of the chosen people from the legends of their captors, it appears to me to be defective in two other ways. (1) Criticism has fairly established, that this section belongs to the Jehovistic group of writings; large portions of this

group incontestably existed at a much earlier date than the Exile; the general character of the Paradise narrative favours the supposition that it does not belong to the later, but rather to the earlier portions of the Jehovistic narrative. (2) There are details in the descriptive language which forbid us to look for any direct derivation from a Babylonian source. It is not probable that Jews residing in Babylon would have accepted the geographical description in ii. 11-14, which contained such an indefinite allusion to "Assyria," or would have imported a mention of the "fig-tree" (iii. 7), a tree which happens not to be a native of Babylonia.

It is better to account for the absence of allusion in the earlier prophets to the Paradise narrative, by the supposition that for a long time the narrative was not cleared from the mythological element, and could not therefore find admission among the most sacred traditions of the religion of Israel. Of course, it would be useless to deny, that the Paradise narrative possesses an affinity with the religious traditions and myths of Assyria and Babylonia. But the affinity is not that of direct derivation at the late period of the Babylonian Exile. It is rather an affinity arising from the ultimate derivation of the narrative from an Assyro-Babylonian source, and from the conservative transmission of it through many generations. Thus, it has been shown, with every appearance of probability, that some of the most important

names and words in the Hebrew narrative reproduce Assyrian words, and that some of the most distinctive features in the story are best illustrated from Assyrian inscriptions. The Assyrian names *Diglat* and *Bura* appear in the Hebrew equivalents, Hiddekel (Tigris) and Prâth (Euphrates); the Hebrew Gihon is possibly the Guhan-di, an artificial branch of the Euphrates. In the name of Eden we have the sound of the Assyrian word "*idinu*," a "field," or "plain," adapted to the Hebrew root meaning "pleasure"; in the "*shôham*"-stone (bdellium) we find possibly a Hebrew form of the Assyrian "*samtu*"; in the name of Abel we should possibly discern the Assyrian root for a "scion" or "shoot," the Hebrew transliteration of which suggested the play on the Hebrew word for "a fleeting breath"; in the Hebrew word "*arom*" for "subtle" in Gen. iii. 1, Mr. Boscawen suggests there is a recollection of the Assyrian "*Lu Erim*" or "magician, the greatest foe of man." (*Cf.* Schrader, *Cuneiform Inscriptions*, vol. i.).

As regards the main features of the story, it is impossible not to trace, in the sacred trees of "the knowledge of good and of evil" and "of life," a resemblance to the coniferous sacred trees, which are depicted in almost every emblematical Assyrian and Babylonian representation. The appearance of the serpent, as the agent of temptation, suggests the Assyrian Tiamat, the evil serpent overthrown by Merodach; and the fact that in several inscriptions

the serpent is called *aibu ilani*, "the enemy of the gods,"[1] illustrates the resemblance of the Genesis narrative to the mythology of Assyro-Babylonia. The cherubim which were stationed to guard the approach to the garden of Eden, have suggested comparison with the colossal griffins that stood at the entrance of Assyrian temples.

These points of resemblance, however, only touch the outer framework of our Paradise narrative. So far, the most that could be said would be that the Assyrian dialect was visible through the Hebrew form of certain proper names, and that features in the story were capable of being illustrated in an interesting manner from Assyrian and Babylonian monuments. Until a short time ago it could not be asserted, with any confidence, that the inscriptions showed any trace of an Assyrian or Babylonian counterpart to the Biblical narrative of the Fall. Even the famous representation upon the seal, adduced by George Smith, on which appeared the sacred tree with its clusters of fruit, with the figures of a man and woman on either side of it, and with a serpent in an erect posture standing behind the woman, did not convince scholars that this was an allusion to the narrative of the Fall. "We certainly," says Schrader, "have no right to assert that the Babylonians had no story of a Fall, although no written accounts bearing upon it have

[1] Boscawen in *The Babylonian and Oriental Record*, Oct. 1890.

hitherto come to hand. We merely contend that it is not presupposed in the above figured representation."[1]

All doubt, however, on the subject has recently been removed. There can now be no longer any question that a narrative of the Fall was included in the literature of the Assyro-Babylonian religion. The conclusive evidence was brought to light by the eminent English Assyriologist, Mr. W. St. C. Boscawen, who made known his discovery in an article on "The Babylonian Legend of the Serpent Tempter," in the October (1890) number of *The Babylonian and Oriental Record.* The important fresh testimony which he adduces is obtained from a passage contained in the much-mutilated Third Creation Tablet, "which describes the various wicked acts of the Serpent Tiamat."

The fragment, as rendered by Mr. Boscawen, runs as follows:—

"The great gods, all of them determiners of fate,
They entered, and, death-like, the god Sar filled.
In sin one with the other in compact joins.
The command was established in the garden of the God.
The Asnan (fruit) they ate, they broke in two,
Its stalk they destroyed;
The sweet juice which injures the body.
Great is their sin. Themselves they exalted.
To Merodach their Redeemer he appointed their fate."

[1] *Cuneiform Inscriptions* (Eng. Trans.) vol. i. p. 38.

"It is almost impossible," continues the translator, "not to see in this fragment the pith of the story of the Fall, while the last line at once brings Merodach before us as the one who would defeat the tempter and restore the fallen. . . . The more we examine the position of Merodach in the Babylonian mythology, the more we see how closely it approaches the Hebrew conception of the Messiah. He was the son of the great earth-mother Dav-Kina, the wife of Ea, and bore as his own name that of *Mar-dugga*, 'the Holy Son.' He was the mediator between gods and men, healing sickness, forgiving sin, raising the dead, not by his own power, but by that of his father Ea; and now we find him acting as the redeemer of the fallen pair. We may be sure that the importance of this small fragment to Biblical students is very great indeed."

Mr. Boscawen further points out that the tree is called "the Asnan tree," and that the word "Asnan," being a derivative from the root "to repeat," means "double fruit" or "double tree," and may account for the double form given to the tree in sculptures, and for the mention of the two trees in the garden. Again, he calls attention to the mention of the gods entering "in a death-like manner," which may be understood to illustrate the words of the Hebrew narrative, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. ii. 17).

It remains to be seen how far Mr. Boscawen's rendering is confirmed by other scholars. But we

may fairly assume that the decipherment of this inscription by so eminent an Assyriologist is likely to prove substantially correct. And without committing ourselves to all the inferences which Mr. Boscawen would be prepared to draw from his translation, we may heartily welcome the discovery. The gap that had seemed so strange is now filled up. The Israelite narrative of the Fall stands in the same relation to Assyro-Babylonian legend as the Israelite narratives of the Creation and the Flood.

As in their case, so also in the case of the Paradise narrative, the resemblance is best explained on the assumption of derivation from an ultimately common source in the religious mythology of Mesopotamia. The original tradition, marred with the intricacies of a bewildering polytheism, was received from their Mesopotamian ancestors by the founders of the Israelite branch of the Semitic race. The manifestation of a purer religion made its influence felt upon the heritage of popular tradition. The form in which it was eventually incorporated among the sacred writings of Israel still bore a genuine resemblance to the kindred legend of Babylonia. Its story, which still carried in words and names the impress of its origin, was invested with the simple dignity characteristic of pure monotheism, and was inspired to express vividly and pictorially some of the profoundest truths which distinguished the spiritual religion of Israel above all religions of antiquity. Thus did

the Holy Spirit overrule the preparation of the volume of "The Word of Life."

Many are the ingenious, and many the absurd, speculations which have been started for the purpose of identifying the locality of the garden of Eden. The most interesting, and by far the most plausible, contribution to this investigation is the celebrated *brochure* of Prof. Fried. Delitzsch, entitled "Wo lag das Paradies?" This is an attempt to identify the site of the garden of Eden with a district of Babylonia, between the rivers Tigris and Euphrates, and formerly intersected by artificial canals. The ingenuity of the arguments by which this eminent Assyriologist maintained his view cannot be denied; but, on the whole, the general impression produced by its elaboration has been that it is a brilliant and ingenious piece of work, yet much more clever than convincing.

I confess, I am one of those who have no wish that the site of Paradise should ever be identified, and am therefore, perhaps, open to the charge of being prejudiced in my belief that it never will be. In my opinion, the theory of the possibility of identification rests upon the erroneous supposition, that the language used in Gen. ii. 8-14 is capable of conveying an accurate geographical description. The proper names of the original tradition have been transliterated, in the Hebrew narrative, into forms in common use among the Israelites, and most nearly resembling them in pronunciation. One example

will suffice. The word "Cush," in ver. 13, would inevitably convey to the Hebrew reader the meaning of "Ethiopia"; but it is evident that no river near the Tigris and the Euphrates could be associated with Ethiopia, and the suggestion is possible that the Hebrew word "Cush" was here used in consequence of a confusion, between Cas, a district in Babylonia, or the Cossaei, the dwellers of Southern Babylonia, and Cush, the well-known name of African Nubia. Thus, even supposing, as I for one should not be prepared to do, that the language of the original tradition indicated a well-known locality in Western Asia, the transmutation of the Assyrian proper names into similarly sounding Hebrew names has made all attempts at recognition doubtful guesswork. But, surely, accurate geographical description is not to be expected from even the original form in which this Semitic tradition was known to the dwellers in Mesopotamia. And are we to expect a greater degree of accuracy from its later forms, whether Assyrian or Hebrew, after they had been altered and modified in order to be brought into harmony with the religious thought of a more advanced period in the history of the race?

Is not the real conception of the locality to be inferred from the language in which it is described? It is a garden in which the Almighty walked, and in which the serpent spoke. It is a place where man, after the Fall, could no longer remain. It is a garden

at whose gates Cherubim, those winged and legendary dragons, at once the guardians of the Divine Majesty (Ezek. xxviii. 13-16, *cf.* Ex. xxv. 18) and the personification of the thundercloud that declared the Divine anger (Ps. xviii. 11, 2 Sam. xxii. 11), were stationed to prevent the man from attempting to re-enter it.

(*c*) *Religious Teaching.*—The description belongs to the poetry of the early Israelite legend. The spiritual teaching which the narrative conveys comprises some of the "deep things" of the Israelite religion.

It taught how in the ideal state, before sin came into the world, man could dwell in the sunlight of the Divine Presence. The true Paradise was the place where God had put him; there he enjoyed the ideal existence. He lived in the exercise of his physical powers; he tended the garden. He enjoyed the command of his intellectual faculties; he named and discriminated the animals. He was a social being, and received, in the institution of marriage, the perfecting of human companionship.

But the blessing of the Divine Presence was conditional upon obedience to the Divine Will. Paradise was forfeited by the preference of selfish appetites over the command of God. The expulsion from Paradise was the inevitable consequence of sin; the desire of man for the lower life was granted. He who asserted his own against the Divine Will had no place in the Paradise of God.

The very powers of the sky, which testify to His might, seemed to bar the way to the Most High, and to exclude the fallen ones from all hope of return.

The very simplicity of the offence, which stands in such startling contrast to the tremendous character of its consequences, is not uninstructive. For it taught how the purpose, even more than the act, is judged in God's sight. It was not the harmfulness of the act, but the rebellion and disobedience against God that brought the condemnation.

The motive impulse to sin was not inherent in man's nature. The temptation came from without him. He was not doomed by nature to fall, but he was gifted with the Godlike faculty of free-will. The submission of man's will to something lower than the Divine Will led to the Fall.

The Fall brought sin and evil in its train. It was no isolated act of wrong-doing. It was infinite in its results. Its effects were felt in the Universe, shared by the creatures, and transmitted to all generations among men. Thus does the narrative illustrate the solidarity of the human race. Modern investigations into heredity have strangely and unexpectedly confirmed its teaching. The thought of such "original sin" were enough to overwhelm us in despair, were it not that in the Person of the Second Adam we have a far more exceeding hope of glory—not the self-preservation, but the corporate reunion, of our race in Christ Jesus our Lord.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE STORY OF PARADISE—*continued*

I DWELT, in the last chapter, upon the narrative of the Fall, and upon its religious significance. There remain, however, two or three points of great importance arising out of the narrative, which I have reserved for a separate consideration.

In the account of the Fall, we have the picture of man's disobedience, and the penalty in which not only he is involved, but also all his descendants. Sin is represented as the cause of separation from God's presence; suffering, pain, death, as its penalty.

The great problem arising from the universality of suffering is thus presented to us in its simplest light. It is the consequence of sin, it is the chastisement for disobedience. In the third chapter of Genesis, suffering and death are very naturally regarded, according to the first and most obvious explanation of the passage, in the light of a punishment alone. But it is only a superficial view of the Israelite narrative that can regard the penalty of physical death (Gen. iii. 19), and all the woes

attendant upon our earthly frame, in the light of the curse. The only "curse" actually uttered in the narrative is pronounced upon the serpent and upon the soil (Gen. iii. 14, 17). The curse under which humanity lies, is the sentence pronounced upon the sinner, that of his expulsion from the presence of God. Physical death is but its type, the memorial of the power of sin, the emblem of its influence. In a colloquial sense, "death" may be "the curse" of the human race; but it is not truly so, and certainly not according to the teaching of our Genesis narrative. We know now that even the penalty of death was not without its mercies. That could be no curse alone which, not only in the Hebrew race, but in every nation under the sun, has been the supreme witness of love, and the highest possible offering of self-sacrifice. That could be no curse alone which leads us in thought to the foot of the Cross, where the Saviour died.

No; physical pain, suffering, and death, these are the witnesses in our flesh to disobedience—a physical penalty, indeed, but a penalty incommensurable with moral guilt. The curse rests upon the sin of our nature, upon all that prompts to it (iii. 14), and all that shares in it (iii. 17). But man is not without hope. Even in death the penalty is a pledge of victory (iii. 15). And even the sorrow and pain, the outward memorials

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of the curse, are limited to "the days of life" (iii. 17).

Such seems to be the teaching of our chapter, when viewed in the light of later Revelation. The theology of the Old Testament follows a line of gradual development, which only recent studies have fully convinced us of. Nowhere, perhaps, is the advance in religious thought so noticeable as in the treatment of the problem of suffering and pain. In the early stages of Israelitish religion, every calamity that overtook individual or nation was apt to be interpreted as a punitive visitation, as a retribution, equivalent, or, at least, corresponding, in degree of misery, to the gravity of the offence. But, in process of time, obvious objections were raised. The cases in which the innocent suffered with the guilty, or in which the innocent suffered and the guilty escaped scot-free, were too numerous to be explained away, either as rare exceptions, or as instances of depravity, where the hypocrisy which eluded human detection was overtaken by the just punishment of God's anger. The sorrows of the innocent are the theme of a large portion of Hebrew poetry; sometimes it is the case of individual, sometimes of national suffering. The Book of Job, many of the Psalms, the Books of Lamentations and Ecclesiastes, and numerous passages among the Prophets, exemplify in different ways the mental disquiet which accompanied the conflict

of the earlier traditional teaching with the fresh facts and new thoughts of a later time. The sorrows of the Exile, and the sufferings of the innocent "servant of the Lord," shed a new light upon the dark mystery, and gave a fresh significance to physical pain and earthly troubles.

The story of the Fall seems at first sight to belong to the earlier stage of thought, as if the proposition were laid down that man's offence was to be paid for in suffering. It may be so. But the language is certainly so chosen, that it is capable of conveying the teaching of the later and nobler development of religious conceptions. The Paradise narrative stands midway between superstition and the final Revelation, having, on the one side, the old and ignorant beliefs which roughly judged all calamity to be a Divine retribution for some known or hidden crime, and, on the other, the Gospel of the Cross of Christ. The Paradise narrative brings a message pregnant with evangelic truth. The punishment which is inflicted as the penalty and as the inevitable consequence of the transgression, is seen to be not vindictive but disciplinary. The infliction of earthly suffering is declared to be the constant witness of Divine displeasure towards sin. But, no less, death is God's appointed way for all flesh; it may be one of sorrow and sadness, it cannot be evil in itself. Death may be welcome—welcome as the grateful end to the assaults and the

ravages of sin, which desolate the earthly life of man: so much, at least, the story of Genesis taught That death might even be the gate leading to eternal life, was the final step of the Revelation made known in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Towards that teaching the Genesis narrative looks. It points us in the direction; it cannot show us the glory that should follow.

How deep and spiritual, then, is the beginning of that consoling lesson in our narrative! death, not the curse itself, but the penalty of it, reminding us of God's "curse" upon sin; death, not evil in itself, but the last page in the book of earthly discipline; death, if the symbol of wrath against sin, yet the pledge of the conquest over sin itself. Instinctively we turn in thought to One who poured out His soul unto death, who became "sin" for us, who was "perfected through sufferings," who "was dead and lived again."

In that bright vision we realise, that the third chapter of Genesis tells no tale of an arbitrary Judge's severity against unoffending generations to come: we see the discipline and the chastisement of man, the result of sin and the warning against it; we hear, in the curse upon the tempter, the wrath that goes eternally forth upon all sin and disobedience; but we see too the crown of thorns, the cross of shame, the death of agony. Physical, mental, spiritual woes are the pledge of perfect love, and

tell forth the overthrow of the enemy, the blotting out of the curse, the forgiveness of sins. The way through the valley of the shadow of death is the way to the Holiest, and has been sanctified for ever by the feet of Him who was made unto us wisdom from God and righteousness and sanctification and redemption (1 Cor. i. 30).

The careful reader will hardly fail to notice the difference between the words of the prohibition, "in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. ii. 17), and the words of the sentence, "in toil shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life . . . for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Gen. iii. 17-19). Some have fancied that they can discern in the difference the manifestation of the Divine mercy, more long-suffering in the execution than in the utterance of a sentence. Whether this explanation be in accordance with true reverence, we need not stop to inquire. But another explanation suggests itself. The Hebrew writer, who clothed this narrative in language agreeing with the teaching of the Spirit of Jehovah, has preserved in the former passage (ii. 17) the more peremptory words of the early version in which the narrative was current, reproducing the ancient belief, that the sentence of physical death was pronounced as the immediate retribution for moral disobedience. This note, as it were, of an earlier theology survives; but the

words in which the Hebrew writer reproduces the actual judgment reflect a later phase of teaching. Death is merciful when it releases man from conditions inseparably bound up with the sin that is the object of Divine displeasure: God has spared man the penalty of living for ever on earth under the conditions of the curse (iii. 22). Death is the climax of the penalty of suffering and pain, the last discipline of physical existence. The sting of death is not suffering, but sin: and the infliction of the disciplinary penalty is accompanied with the promise of victory over that which had separated man from his Maker (iii. 15).

My remarks upon this section would be incomplete, if I did not, briefly at least, call attention to the mention of (1) the serpent, and (2) the promise made to the woman.

(1) The serpent appears in the narrative as the agent of the temptation, the medium through which is presented to man the consciousness of a choice to be made between good and evil, between obedience and disobedience, between the will of God and the desire of the flesh.

The introduction of the serpent in Gen. iii. 1 is strangely abrupt, while it is no less strange that after ver. 14 no further allusion is made to it. The language used suggests that the serpent was supposed to have appeared in the garden of Eden in a different

form from that which it was condemned to take (Gen. iii. 14). And, as the reader has probably observed, there is no reference to a spirit of evil, no direct identification of the serpent with any unseen malignant influence, with any hostile spiritual power.

An explanation of this is probably forthcoming from the general character of the narrative. The serpent constantly appears in the early legends of primitive races. It is regarded with feelings either of especial alarm or of especial veneration. In Persia, for instance, it was the emblem of the god of evil; while among the Greeks it was associated with the gift of prophecy and with the power of healing. Among the ancient Babylonians, Tiamat or Chaos was represented under the figure of a gigantic serpent or dragon, whose overthrow by Merodach brought deliverance to the universe. We can hardly question that the mention of the serpent, in the original form of the Hebrew legend, occupied a more prominent position than it does in Genesis, and that it was enveloped in much that had a close family resemblance to the somewhat grotesque and childish pictures of the legends that have come down to us in the cuneiform inscriptions. But whatsoever was associated with the taint of idolatry, of degrading superstition, of unedifying expansion, the Hebrew writers, who were imbued with the pure faith of Jehovah, have rigorously excluded. In consequence, the serpent is first suddenly brought before us in the

narrative, and then as suddenly withdrawn, without explanation and without identification.

It plays no part, such as it would have done in a polytheistic version, of powerful antagonism to the God that made and loved man. The enmity of the serpent is implied, not stated.

The serpent in our narrative supplies the external motive to sin. The suggestion to disobedience, and the doubt of God's goodness and justice, neither emanate from the man himself, nor constitute a form of temptation by which God Himself tried man's heart. God tempted not to sin; nor was man created sinful. Over the origin of the external motive supplied by the serpent, the narrative in Genesis maintains a silence that stands in marked contrast to the emblematic scenes, in other early religions, accounting for the origin of evil. We here learn only that sin is not of God, and that it is not of man; that it comes from without man; that it is permitted of God; and that its purpose is to test man's power of choice, and his willingness to prefer God's will to his own desires.

It cannot, therefore, be asserted that the Personality of the Spirit of Evil is here directly taught. Our own conception of the scene is inevitably coloured by the recollection of Milton's powerful imaginative description, and it is difficult for us to dissociate our thoughts from the influence of *Paradise Lost*. But, when we do, we see that the narrative emphasises the subtle

character, not what we should call the satanic origin, of the Temptation. The suggestion made by the serpent is obviously evil, but how the serpent comes to impersonate evil is not explained.

In the early days of Israelite theology, the idea of a Personal Spirit of Evil was only dimly, if at all, apprehended. The very name of "Satan" or "opposer" is found, in the Hebrew of Num. xxii. 32, applied to an angel of Jehovah, which is sufficient to show that it had not yet become associated with a spiritual enemy of mankind. The heathen gods, it is true, were wont to be identified with demons (Deut. xxxii. 17). But the temptation which put to the test the faith of a righteous man, is described, in the history of Abraham, and in the earlier narrative of David's reign, as emanating from Jehovah Himself (*cf.* Gen. xxii., 2 Sam. xxiv. 1). The later conception is found first, perhaps, in the Book of Job, which was composed, probably, in the period of the Exile. "The Adversary" is there represented as attending the court of Jehovah, and as testifying evil of man (Job i.-ii.); the same Personal Spirit seems to occupy a similar malignant office in Zechariah (iii. 1); while in the Books of Chronicles the very temptation of David, which in the Books of Samuel was said to have come from Jehovah, is assigned to the suggestion of Satan (*cf.* 1 Chron. xxi. 1). In later literature the Personality of the Evil One is yet more definitely recognised; and it became generally accepted that

the serpent, which was the medium of the Temptation in the story of the Fall, could have been no other than Satan, by which name the Evil Spirit was designated. Proof of this appears in such a passage as Wisdom ii. 24, and in the use of the appellation "the old serpent," Rev. xii. 9, xx. 2.

It is noticeable, therefore, that when St. Paul refers to the narrative of the Fall, he uses language which is based upon the simplest and most direct interpretation of the passage (1 Cor. xi. 3, "As the serpent beguiled Eve in his craftiness"). He lays emphasis there on the subtle character of the temptation; he does not draw attention to the Personal Spirit of Evil, nor does he directly say it was personified in the serpent. Whether the serpent was the Evil One or only his agent, he does not attempt to discriminate (*cf.* 1 Tim. ii. 14). The curse pronounced upon the serpent implies, without the fact being asserted in so many words, that an evil and hostile Personality was represented by it. To the Israelite the serpent was the witness of God's displeasure against the rebellion of human selfishness; but it was also the symbol of the Principle of Evil through which man by transgression fell. But, though the serpent thus evidently represents in some way the source of temptation, the narrative itself makes no attempt to penetrate further into the mystery of the origin of evil. In the light of the New Testament, in which we are privileged to see

things now, we may discern the shadow of "the Prince of this world" as he stands behind the instrument of his evil suggestion. But his presence is not directly affirmed in the letter of our chapter.

(2) In the words of the curse pronounced upon the serpent there occurs the passage which merits special attention, Gen. iii. 15: "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise (marg. Or, *lie in wait for*) thy head, and thou shalt bruise (marg. Or, *lie in wait for*) his heel." According to the translation of the A. V. and R. V., the metaphor is drawn from a man crushing a serpent with his foot, and a serpent fastening its teeth in a man's heel. The other rendering, which introduces the idea of a carefully planned ambush (*cf.* Gen. xlix. 17), is supported by the Septuagint version *αὐτός σου κεφαλὴν τηρήσει καὶ σὺ τηρήσεις αὐτοῦ πτέρναν.* The Vulgate combines the alternative renderings, "ipsa conteret caput tuum, et tu insidiaberis calcaneo suo."

The merely literal explanation of the verse clearly does not exhaust its meaning. There is something more in the words than a declaration that the human race will always view the serpent race with feelings of instinctive aversion. There is something more in the words than a prediction that mankind will be able to assert superiority over this reptile

foe among the beasts of the field. We need not doubt that, whichever of the alternative renderings of the verb be preferred, the underlying thought is that of a *spiritual* conflict between the race of man and the influences of temptation, between humanity with its gift of choice and the Principle of Evil which ever suggests the satisfaction of the lower desires. But, in addition to this main thought, a twofold encouragement is given to nerve man for the fray. He is endowed with capacities enabling him if he will use them, to inflict a deadly blow upon the adversary. He stands erect, he is made in the image of God. Furthermore, the promise of ultimate victory is assured to him. How it is to be effected is not explained in the context. Both Jewish and Christian interpretation have given to the promise the significance of a Messianic prediction. From the time of Irenæus (170 A.D.), "the seed of the woman" has been understood in the Christian Church as an allusion to a personal Messiah. Calvin, followed by the majority of the Reformers, explained the words in a more general sense, regarding "the seed of the woman" as the descendants of the first woman, but yet as those from among whom, according to the flesh, the Messiah should come.

The words of the verse, it must be admitted, are quite general. Interpreting them in the light of their immediate context, we cannot say that the Hebrew writer foresaw their fulfilment in any one

individual.[1] And yet, quite general as the words seem to be in their application to those who should be descended from the woman, we cannot fail to see, in the light of the New Testament, the appropriateness of the language used to its Messianic verification. "The seed of the woman" has triumphed through Him who is the representative of all mankind (*cf.* Rom. v. 12-21), through Him who, being born of a pure Virgin, was in a special sense "the seed of the woman." That victory was potential for the whole race. Its full consummation shall be hereafter. "And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly" (Rom. xvi. 20).

[1] The old Roman explanation, referring the promise of victory to the woman herself, and assuming that the "*ipsa* conteret," which is the erroneous rendering of the Vulgate, contained an allusion to the Virgin Mary, needs now only to be recorded as a curiosity in the history of Interpretation.

## CHAPTER V

### THE STORY OF CAIN AND ABEL

To the general reader the familiar narrative contained in the fourth chapter of Genesis seems to follow easily and naturally upon that of the third. In language and style the story of Cain and Abel greatly resembles the story of Paradise; and, although in the genealogy of the Cainites (iv. 17-24) we are conscious of a change in the style, the change is not so marked as is the case in the following chapter (v.). In chapter iv. the narrative is, in the main, taken from the Prophetic, in chapter v. from the Priestly, records employed in the compilation of the Pentateuch.

It is necessary, however, to look a little more closely into the structure of this chapter. For there are points even here which will have already suggested themselves to many a Bible student as difficulties or peculiarities; and a better understanding of the structure enables us to obtain a solution of them.

Chap. iv. 1-16.—To many it has, perhaps, seemed

strange that we have no account of the life of Adam and Eve after their expulsion from the Garden of Eden. Where they dwelt, how they subsisted, whether Adam tilled the soil or followed a pastoral life, are questions to which no answer is given. The birth of Cain and Abel (iv. 1-2) alone intervenes between the description of the cherubim with the flaming swords, and the narrative of the murder of Abel by his brother Cain, at a time when apparently they had both already reached manhood. The brief reference in chap. v. 3-5 hardly lifts the veil which has hidden from our view the sight of the remainder of Adam's sojourn upon earth.

But the narrative clearly presupposes much that is not related in the Book of Genesis. Abel is "a keeper of sheep," Cain "a tiller of the ground" (Genesis iv. 2). The process by which the distinction into pastoral and agricultural life had been reached we are not told. The Israelite narrative was composed when that distinction could be assumed to have had a primæval origin, and to have resulted from the usage of the first family. In the present narrative we are left in ignorance whether Adam, when he was driven from the garden, followed agricultural or pastoral pursuits, a settled life or a roving one; whether Abel was the founder of pastoral habits, or received them from his father.

The practice of sacrifice is presupposed (chap.

iv. 4, 5). An offering to the Lord might consist of "the fruit of the ground," or of "the firstlings of the flock and the fat thereof." But no account is given of the origin of the institution. And while, on the twofold ground that the slaughter of animals was primitively indistinguishable from sacrifice, and that our first ancestors did not eat flesh (Gen. ix. 3), it is often assumed that the Divine appointment of sacrifice is implied in the previous chapter, "And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife coats of skins, and clothed them" (iii. 21), it is really impossible to regard those words as capable of literally conveying such a meaning. Candour requires us to acknowledge that the early narratives, as they have come down to us, fail to give any account of the institution of sacrifice. The mention of it in this narrative is introduced quite suddenly.

The custom of blood-revenge is presupposed. Cain's dread of the punishment imposed upon him is due to his fear, lest the dwellers in the land should avenge Abel's blood by putting the murderer to death (ver. 14). Such a custom, and the fears resulting from it, point to a more organised society, and to a larger development of the population, than the extant narrative gives us any reason to expect.

Similarly, in the following section (vers. 17-24), Cain marries, and builds a city (ver. 17); and this

presupposes a rapid increase in the numbers of the earth's inhabitants, of which we are told nothing beyond the fact that "Adam begat sons and daughters" (Gen. v. 4).

It is true that some have fancied they could find in these passages allusions to families that had sprung from a different stock than that of Adam, from other primæval pairs of whom no account is preserved. Into the scientific question which this theory involves I pretend no right, and therefore have no wish, to enter. But I do not expect to find, in the early pages of Genesis, scientific hints, of this allusive nature, as to the origin of the peopling of the globe. Without committing ourselves to an opinion whether the population of our planet is to be ultimately traced to one or to many primitive pairs, it will be best for us who are Biblical students to avoid mere *a priori* speculation, and to leave such problems in the hands of competent and impartial investigators in the special branches of anthropology and physiology. As for us, we may be content to restrict ourselves to the Scripture narrative. And the inference which we unhesitatingly draw is that, according to the general tenor of Israel's theology, "every nation of men was made of one" (*cf.* Acts xvii. 26), viz. was regarded as descended from Adam.

It seems, indeed, to be placed beyond all doubt by the very mention of Cain's alarm. The ground

of his dread is that the avenger of blood will seek to take away his life; and the avenger of blood, according to the Oriental custom to which the narrative seems to point, belonged to the family of the murdered man. Cain's words assume that all the dwellers on the earth are his kinsmen.

If so, the narrative presupposes the birth of many children to Adam and Eve, who thickly peopled the country at the time of Abel's murder. But all particular mention of them has been suppressed in the extant narrative.

Now, I confess, I am not disposed to share the doubt, which some critics have expressed, as to whether the story of Cain and Abel comes from the same hand that wrote the two previous chapters. There is the same kind of dialogue; there is the same class of vivid narrative; there are the same marked expressions ("tiller of the ground," *cf.* ver. 2 with ii. 5; the unusual word for "desire," *cf.* ver. 7 with iii. 17; the "curse," *cf.* ver. 11 with iii. 14); "Eden," too, is referred to in ver. 16; and, in the same verse, another geographical term occurs with apparently a similarly symbolical significance, *i.e.* "Nod," which, with the sense of "Wandering," seems to denote the primitive condition of Nomad life.

If, then, this section comes from the same hand, and yet presupposes acquaintance with numerous facts and incidents, the history of which is not recorded, we are forced to the conclusion that the

narrative does not flow continuously from chap. iii. to chap. iv.; but that the compiler has extracted only such portions as seemed best to correspond to the purpose which he had in view.

On this hypothesis, we find an explanation for the absence of any further account of the life of Adam and Eve, or of their children. We may fairly assume that the tradition, in its earliest form, contained other narratives, such as illustrated the beginnings of agricultural and pastoral pursuits, and described the institution of sacrifice, and explained the origin of blood-revenge.

Either the Prophetic narrator, or the compiler, has selected the narrative; he has not attempted to give a complete or a consecutive story. If, as is very possible, the narrative was one that was derived from the traditions of the polytheistic ancestors of the Israelite race before the days of Abraham, he had probably to purify it of all taint of superstition. In the course of that process many details may have been suppressed or modified.

If the earliest Hebrew traditions ever regarded the offspring and descendants of the first man as semi-divine heroes, it would only have been analogous to what we find in the mythologies of other races. But the existing Hebrew narrative is in this respect very different. The earliest patriarchs of the human race appear as simple men. They are endowed with no Divine qualities. Between the

God of Israel and the founders of human society the division, according to the Hebrew narrative, is complete. This, of course, may have been the characteristic of the Hebrew tradition from the first. But it appears more reasonable to ascribe the exceeding purity and simplicity of the narrative to the Prophetic writer, who, writing in the spirit and power of Jehovah, has moulded the traditions of his race into perfect harmony with the religious truths of which he was the inspired exponent, and admitted nothing which compromised the fundamental doctrines of the Unity and the Love and the All-sufficiency of Jehovah.

To this method of making extracts from the existing tradition, we may attribute the abruptness with which the narrative of Cain and Abel is introduced at ver. 2 and dismissed at ver. 16. Possibly to the necessity of abbreviating the story, or to that of excluding some remnant of superstition, we may also ascribe the peculiarity of the words in ver. 8, And Cain told Abel his brother," which, more literally rendered, would be, "And Cain said unto Abel his brother." What Cain actually said, the Hebrew narrative has not recorded. It is hardly likely that the attempt of the Septuagint Version to supply the gap with the somewhat vapid sentence, "Let us go unto the field,"[1] has preserved the original text.

[1] διέλθωμεν εἰς τὸ πεδίον.

For, assuming it to have been in the original text, we can see no sufficient reason to account for its disappearance from the Hebrew copies. On the other hand, if the Hebrew text is correct, the words of the Septuagint addition have all the appearance of an explanatory gloss.

Whatever the words of Cain were in the original narrative, they have been for ever lost. But the reason of their disappearance is possibly to be found in the practice of the compiler or narrator, who, while extracting or condensing from the traditional narrative, would qualify, abbreviate, or omit, that which did not seem suitable to, or was in actual disagreement with, the revealed religion of Israel. Some such explanation would account for the abruptness of ver. 8. It resembles, as it were, a piece of the rough edging which shows where a fragment has been torn off.

Some such explanation, again, will account for the other difficulties that the narrative presents—for the most part, arising from the condensation employed by the Israelite narrator.

Thus, we are not told the reason why Divine preference was accorded to the sacrifice of Abel, nor how that preference was made known. The ancient views that an offering of animals was preferred above an offering of fruits of the earth, or that Abel had more correctly performed the ritual of the offering, are mere guess-work; and,

even if correct, only touch the outer framework of the story. As the narrator has given us the story, omitting the grounds of preference (which, in the earliest tradition, may have been of the superficial character indicated by the above suggestions, or of a superstitious origin, due to the polytheism of the primitive Hebrews), it is clear he himself wishes to draw attention to the inner motives, and to the moral characters, of the offerers, by which alone the value of their respective offerings could be really distinguished. In the true spirit of Israelite prophecy, he may have wished to emphasise the teaching that it was the spirit of the offerer, and not the mode of the offering, which from the first determined the acceptability of every sacrifice in the sight of God (*cf.* Ps. l. 8-15; Isa. i. 11-17; 1 Sam. xv. 22). This thought quite escaped the Septuagint translators, who seemed to suppose that the rebuke contained in ver. 7 turned upon Cain's neglect to prepare his offering according to strict ceremonial requirements.[1] The true insight into the matter is found in the words of the Epistle to the Hebrews, "*By faith* Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain" (xi. 4).[2]

Again, the mode by which the Divine preference for Abel's sacrifice was indicated is not recorded. Early Jewish interpretation (*e.g.* Theodotion, ἐνεπύ-

[1] οὐκ ἐὰν ὀρθῶς προσενέγκῃς, ὀρθῶς δὲ μὴ διέλῃς, ἥμαρτες;

[2] See page 74.

ρισεν), followed by Christian Fathers and Mediæval Jewish Commentators (*e.g.* Rashi), fancifully supplied the omission by maintaining that fire from heaven came down and devoured the offering of Abel. This theory was based on the supposition that the acceptability of sacrifice would be signified in the same way as in Judges vi. 21, 1 Kings xviii. 38, 2 Chron. vii. 1. Here, too, very possibly, the form of the original tradition possessed features which were out of harmony with the simple story the narrator has preserved.

Possibly for some similar reason, he has not told us what the sign was which God appointed for Cain. The old difficulty which was connected with the words, "The Lord set a mark upon Cain," disappears in the rendering of the Revised Version, "The Lord appointed a sign for Cain" (ver. 15). A mark set upon Cain would have distinguished him, so that all who met him might know him. This would be no pledge of security, no consolation to the guilty man. But, when we read that the Lord *appointed* a sign for Cain, so that, looking upon it, he might be reminded of the Divine protection, the words of the passage become easy to understand. The rainbow (see Gen. ix. 13) was thus "set" for "a token" to Noah and his descendants. What the token was that Cain received, we are not told. In this particular, once more, the narrator has withheld information, either for the purpose of condensing his narrative

or for the purpose of suppressing some unsuitable element in the more ancient tradition.

Whether, then, the narrative presupposes acquaintance with facts which have not been narrated, or omits to give particulars of seemingly important elements in the story, the conclusion which we draw from the structure of the narrative is the same.

The peculiarities of the structure are due to the purpose which the narrator had in view. That purpose is not to reproduce in full the whole substance of the early Hebrew traditions respecting the history of primæval man. His purpose is rather to *select* from them just such incidents as will most simply and effectively illustrate the teaching of the Israelite religion respecting the attributes of God and the nature of man; such, too, as would exemplify the steps by which primitive man declined from his true calling "unto righteousness," and by which the selection of the chosen family and nation came to be ordained as the only means of the ultimate restoration of the human race.

The narrator's purpose, both in selecting the story and in condensing or in embellishing it, is a truly prophetic one; he makes known the "Torah," or teaching, of the LORD, "being moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Pet. i. 21).

For this reason the story is not to be regarded as having been preserved to us, either in its original fulness, or in exact continuity with that which pre-

cedes and follows. Between the origin of the tradition itself and the determining cause which led to its selection by the "Prophetic" narrator, a very clear line of distinction needs to be drawn. If the claim be made that the actual origin of the story is to be traced back to the recollection, in the people's consciousness, of the unceasing collision between the agricultural and the pastoral elements in prehistoric man, and of the dominance asserted by the former, there is doubtless something to be said in favour of the theory. But it does not fall within my province here to investigate the merits of such a speculation. Neither that, nor any archæological clue, however interesting to modern ethnological research, was present to the mind of the Israelite narrator, to whom we owe the preservation of the story.[1]

What his purpose was in selecting it and assimilating it to the requirements of his people's religion, appears more or less clearly from the truths which the narrator so clearly brings to light. So clearly, indeed, do they stand out that they will naturally have suggested themselves to the minds of most readers. Perhaps, however, it may not be altogether superfluous to summarise them here very briefly.

The religious teaching conveyed by the story of Cain and Abel relates to the subjects of sin, man's

[1] No certain points of contact with the story of Cain and Abel have yet been discovered in Babylonian literature.

fallen nature, and the attitude of the Almighty towards the sinner.

1. As to sin, it teaches that propensity to it is transmitted from one generation to another. The sin of Adam and Eve is followed by that of Cain. The sin of disobedience to God is followed by the violation of human brotherhood. The first sign of sin's prevalence in the family of Adam is the murder of Cain. The rejection of God's love leads at once to the renunciation of human affection. There was no love to God, no willingness to listen to the Divine voice, in Cain. The occasion of the sacrifice is the temptation by which his character is put to the test. Self-will, pride, jealousy, these are the steps by which the thought of deliberate murder is reached. Cain becomes the archetype of sin and the antithesis of the character of Christ. "Whoso hateth his brother is a murderer; and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. Hereby know we love, because He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 John iii. 15, 16). Cain, according to the teaching of Israelite theology, personified the action of sin in human society. Hatred against fellow-men is the fruit of rebellion against God. "For this is the message which ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another: not as Cain was of the evil, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his works were evil, and his brother's

righteous" (1 John iii. 11, 12). Worship offers nc safeguard against temptation. An act of sacrifice had no restraining influence over the murderous intention. Thus, in this early page of Genesis, we find an anticipation of the condemnation, pronounced on those that sought to honour God with the lip though the heart was far from Him (*cf.* Isa. xxix. 13, Mark vii. 6).

2. As regards human nature, the picture of Cain and Abel portrayed how, from the first, opposition has subsisted between good and evil, between faith and self-will, between obedience and lawlessness. The two brothers, brought up in the same family, engaged in the same act of worship, became the types, the one of sin, the other of righteousness. "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he had witness borne to him that he was righteous, God bearing witness in respect of his gifts" (Heb. xi. 4). The approach to God, in the rite of sacrifice, was in Abel's case no mere outward form, but the true expression of his heart's desire to draw near to God. This was true "righteousness"; and it is thus that "the blood of righteous Abel" (Matt. xxiii. 35) stands at the head of the roll of martyrs, who paid with their lives for the inward yearning of their hearts towards God.

It was thus that "righteous Abel" became a type of the true Israel, of the prophets who witnessed for Jehovah against their countrymen, and, in the highest

sense, of the suffering Servant,[1] who was himself a sacrifice for sin. For, as the preference shown to Abel's sacrifice evoked Cain's murderous resolve, so the manifestation of perfect purity and innocence "convicted the world in respect of sin" (John xvi. 8). The death of Abel strikes a prophetic note of warning. It proclaims the great opposition, of which we find the climax in John i. 11, "He came unto His own, and they that were His own received Him not." And we turn instinctively to another message of encouragement amid conflict, "If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (*cf.* the whole passage, John xv. 18-24).

Once more, the narrative teaches that God left not Himself without witness, even with those who had estranged themselves from Him. The words spoken to Cain (vers. 6, 7) were the Divine witness, reminding us of the spiritual office of conscience, to the heart that had given itself up to the service of sin. If Cain hears rebuke, he receives also both exhortation and promise. But Cain is a free agent. He is under no compulsion to obey God. He is at liberty to hearken to or to reject the voice that comes to him. His sin is the outcome of the abuse of his free-will, that Divine gift, which he has received by inheritance from the first parents.

[1] *Cf.* Isaiah liii.

Not least, the narrative teaches the interdependence of the human race, the obligations which we are under, the one to the other. The lesson that we are our "brothers' keepers" has been little learned. And yet, how much has the thought of it been drawn from the scene so simply and so vividly represented, in which Cain, confronted with his crime, and reminded of his duty of love to his brother, endeavours to repudiate his responsibility! (ver. 9).

3. In respect of its teaching about God, the narrative presents Him to us as long-suffering towards the sinner, as well as compassionate towards the innocent sufferer. He who arraigns Cain for the crime had, before its commission, warned him of his fault, and urged him to well-doing. Nothing escapes His eye, nothing is hid from His knowledge. It is not for the faithlessly offered sacrifice, but for the unseen passion of Cain's heart, that the Lord calls him to reason.

The sin is no sooner committed than it comes under judgment. The punishment is heavier than it had been in the case of Adam and Eve. They were driven from Eden, out of the Divine presence. Cain is driven from the neighbourhood of Eden. The earth shall refuse to give him continued sustenance; he shall roam from spot to spot; he is to be for ever homeless, unloved, a vagabond. But, though banished from the sight, he is not shut out from the mercy, of

God. The judgment is tempered with compassion Cain, though more terrified than penitent, receives the assurance of protection from blood-revenge. The favour of a token for good is granted to the first murderer; and symbolism is consecrated, in its earliest use, to hold a pledge of Divine love before the sinner's eyes.

# CHAPTER VI

## THE ANTEDILUVIAN PATRIARCHS

### *The Genealogy of the Cainites*

(Chap. iv. 17-24)

In passing to the next section in the narrative, we are conscious of a change in the general tone and style. If the story of Cain and Abel (vers. 2-16) has been taken from the same source as the story of Paradise, it is possible that vers. 17-24 have been derived from a separate stream of tradition, marked by a more curt and archaic, a less fluent and poetic, style. Its separate origin is shown by the general difference of treatment; and, in favour of its probably greater antiquity, it should be observed that the contents of Lamech's Song (ver. 24), being very possibly alluded to by anticipation, have influenced the language in ver. 15. Further evidence of its separate origin is forthcoming from the picture given of Cain. No restless fugitive or homeless nomad, he marries, he settles down, and builds a city (ver. 17). No further reference is made to the crime he has committed,

none to any sentence of dishonour that has been pronounced upon him. He stands at the head of a list of names; he is followed by Enoch, Irad, Mehujael, Methusael, and Lamech with his sons Jabal, Jubal, and Tubal-Cain. The whole passage is clearly intended to describe the beginnings of primitive eastern civilisation. Cain and Enoch are the founders of town communities (ver. 17); Lamech is the first polygamist (ver. 19); Jabal (not Abel, ver. 2) is the originator of pastoral life, Jubal of musical arts, Tubal of working in metals (ver. 22). The civilisation thus alluded to is regarded as having continued without interruption since the days of these patriarchs. When it is said that "Jabal" was "the father of such as dwell in tents and have cattle," there is clearly no thought of a flood having destroyed all the descendants of Jabal; nor is such a catastrophe supposed as having overtaken the descendants of Jubal, "such as handle the harp and pipe" (ver. 21).

The structure and contents of these verses (17-24) suggest that they are derived from an early tradition in which the story of the Flood did not appear. If so, they may probably be derived from the same source as chap. vi. 1-4 and, possibly, xi. 1-9.

This hypothesis will account for the difficulties, unimportant in themselves, that arise on the surface of the narrative. The Prophetic narrator selected his material from different sources. He did not

concern himself with reconciling, in every particular, divergences that presented themselves in the different narratives. The genealogy which he has here preserved is that of Cain. But it does not appear from the contents of vers. 17-24, that, in the tradition from which he has derived this section, any evil taint was associated with the family of Cain in consequence of Cain's crime. The popular assumption that Cain's descendants were pre-eminently wicked has no foundation in this chapter, nor in chapter vi.

The object of the genealogy in chap. iv. is to trace the origin of primitive institutions; the object of the genealogy in chap. v. is to trace the ancestors of Noah. The resemblance in the names of the two lists is remarkable; and can hardly be accidental. In chap. iv. we have Cain, Enoch, Irad, Mehujael, Methusael, Lamech, and Lamech's three sons; in chap. v. we have Seth, Enosh, *Kenan, Mahalalel, Jared, Enoch, Methuselah, Lamech,* Noah, and Noah's three sons. The six Sethite names here italicised are those which are similar in sound and form to the names of the Cainite group. Reckoning Adam with these names, we have in the one case a list of seven, in the other a list of ten, names; in each case the last name splits up into three branches.

The numbers *seven* and *ten* were doubtless chosen to render the lists easier of remembrance. Such artificial aids to the recollection of genealogies were

commonly employed. Thus the number "ten" is the number employed in the genealogies of Genesis xi. and Ruth iv. 10; the number "seven" is the unit in the genealogy of Matthew i.

What the names of the antediluvian patriarchs signified, we can hardly guess. The conjecture that the Cainite genealogy gives the races of Western, the Sethite genealogy those of Eastern Asia, has nothing to recommend it.

The formation of some of the names is a puzzle to scholars; and philologists have even doubted whether they are all of Semitic origin.

The similarity of the two lists makes it possible that we have in them two divergent versions of the same original prehistoric tradition. In such a tradition, proper names, especially those of unusual sound or foreign origin, were apt to be confused and altered.

Perhaps we should not be far wrong in regarding them as constituting a group of demigods or heroes, whose names, in the earliest days of Hebrew tradition, filled up the blank between the creation of man and the age of the Israelite patriarchs. Such a group would be in accordance with the analogy of the primitive legends of other races. The removal of every taint of polytheistic superstition, the presentation of these names as the names of ordinary human beings, would be the work of the Israelite narrator.

The compiler of Genesis, finding the two versions of the Patriarchal list, the one in the Prophetic, the other in the Priestly narrative, assigned to the Cainites the sources of secular supremacy, to the Sethites the direct ancestry of the chosen race. He explains his treatment of the two genealogies by the verses, iv. 25, 26, which form the transition from the Prophetic to the Priestly writing.

As has often been pointed out, the different materials out of which the narratives have been constructed are nowhere more plainly to be recognised than here. The same writer who records the birth of Seth and Enosh in chap. v. 3-8, is not likely to have recorded them in the section immediately preceding (iv. 25, 26). Again, whereas in iv. 26 we are told that "then began men to call upon the name of the Lord," we are surely not reading words from the same hand that describes the ceremonial act of worship performed by Cain and Abel (iv. 3, 4).

By thus distinguishing the different *strata* of Israelite tradition, represented in vers. 1-16, 17-24, 25-26, we shall be in a position to realise the method by which the narratives were actually compiled. The fact that the narratives are neither complete nor continuous, but fragmentary and disjointed, receives from criticism an intelligible explanation. But criticism does not only explain the details of the structure; it throws light upon the

work as a whole, in the shape in which it has come down to us. It enables us to perceive that the object of the narrator was not to give the most full narrative, but that which best served his purpose of conveying to his countrymen spiritual instruction. Through him there descends upon the Hebrew tradition respecting prehistoric ages the same illumination which the Spirit of Jehovah, by other hands, shed upon the more recent history of the chosen people.

### *The Genealogy of the Sethites*

The Genealogy of the Sethites is contained in chapter v. The reader will observe at a glance how widely this genealogy differs from that of the Cainites (iv. 16-24), both in the general treatment and in the style and language. The compiler of the book here returns to the Priestly narrative, the same literary source from which he drew the opening section of the Book of Genesis (i. 1-ii. 4$^{a}$).

We notice the same orderly grouping of the subject-matter that we remarked upon in that section. We find a return to the use of the Divine name "Elohim." We find that in vers. 1-3 the language is based upon chap. i. 27. We find the Hebrew words for "generations" (ver. 1), "male and female" (ver. 2), "beget" (ver. 3), which are

characteristic of this source of the narrative in other portions of Genesis. Elsewhere in the Pentateuch it is the same hand that introduces bare and formal lists in the intervals of the history (*e.g.* xi. 10-26, xxxvi., xlvi. 8-27). Thus, the change in the style and treatment, which a thoughtful reader is at first inclined to consider strange and abrupt, receives a natural explanation in the compilatory structure of the Book of Genesis.

The only extract from another source to be found in this chapter is, in all probability, ver. 29. In that verse we observe not only the change in the use of the Divine name, but also a departure from the formal character of the genealogy, and a popular explanation of the name of Noah. Popular, we may call it, for the name is not derived from *nakhem*, "to comfort," but from *nuakh*, "to rest." We should, therefore, probably be right in regarding this verse as an insertion by the compiler himself. At any rate, as it stands, it does not wear the look of being homogeneous with the remainder of the chapter.

The genealogy itself could hardly be simpler. Beside the names of the Patriarchs we are told nothing but their ages, both at the time of the birth of their first-born and at the time of their death, and the fact that each of the Patriarchs begat sons and daughters. Of the Patriarch Enoch alone is any further description given. There is no account

of the rise of arts, or of the progress of civilisation, or even of the state of morality, among the Sethites. The bare category, which records the succession, by the line of the eldest sons, in the family of Seth, implies the spread of a large population over the face of the earth. The faint outline which we thus obtain serves to bridge the interval of 1656 years which, according to the Hebrew tradition, occurred between the Creation and the Flood.[1]

The chief difficulty arising from this chapter is presented by the immense prolongation of life. The explanations which have generally been put forward, in order to account for the length of life of the antediluvian Patriarchs, have not, it must be confessed, been very satisfactory. Most commonly it has been assumed that, in the generations of primæval man, the powers of human nature were fresher and stronger; that they had not yet been sapped by lust and self-indulgence; that health was better, and life therefore longer. But I cannot think that such an assumption will be seriously maintained in the present day. (*a*) I am not aware that physiologists have been able to show that man's physical vitality, in the infancy of the race, was greater than it has been in later times. (*b*) The analogy of savage tribes, in a stage of primitive

[1] In the Septuagint Version the same period appears as 2242 years, in the Samaritan as 1307.

barbarism, does not favour the theory of prolonged life in pre-civilised times. (*c*) There is nothing in the earliest Assyrian or Egyptian inscriptions, from which we should infer that in pre-Abrahamic centuries a longer duration of life was enjoyed. (*d*) The literal acceptance of this extended span of life confronts us with fresh difficulties in connexion with the age of the Patriarchs at the time when their eldest children were born to them. None had children earlier than Mahalalel and Enoch; and they were already 65 years of age. Noah was 500 years old when Shem was born. (*e*) Assuming that the great event of the Deluge took place in the confines of an historic period (as is implied by the references to it in other literature, as well as by the Genesis narrative), the figures in chap. v. fail altogether to satisfy the interval of time which the researches of Natural Science require us to interpose between the first appearance of man and even the earliest records of Assyrian and Egyptian history, which carry us back at least as far as 4000 B.C.

In order to escape these and similar difficulties, it has been suggested that the names of the ten Patriarchs represent different races or tribes, and that the years recorded in this chapter denote the period of the dynasties which ruled over them. The tendency to represent ethnology and geography by genealogy is exemplified, as we shall see, in chap. x.;

but, in the present chapter, the allusion to the first-born, and the exceptional mention of Enoch, are rightly deemed fatal to this suggestion.

Still less probable, and surely less ingenuous, are the explanations which assume that an antediluvian year was of shorter duration than the ordinary year; or that it consisted of three months until Abraham's time, of eight months until Joseph's death, and of twelve months since his day. By such explanations the interval between the Creation and the epoch of the Flood is rendered even shorter, and therefore proportionately less credible.

It seems more candid and natural to admit, that Israelite tradition, like the traditions of other races, in dealing with personages living in prehistoric times, assigned to them an abnormally protracted period of life. Hebrew literature does not, in this respect, differ from other literature. It preserves the prehistoric traditions. The study of science precludes the possibility of such figures being literally correct. The comparative study of literature leads us to expect exaggerated statements in any work incorporating the primitive traditions of a people.

The genealogy of the Patriarchs supplies the literary transition from the Creation to the epoch of the Deluge. It is necessary to the structure of the narrative; and it thus subserves the higher purpose fulfilled by the description of the events

that have preceded and of the events that are about to follow—events of such transcendent importance in the spiritual teaching which they conveyed and interpreted, as in a picture, to Israel.

It has been before pointed out that the selection of material for the composition of Genesis has preserved to us fragments of early traditions, to which very obvious parallels can be drawn from other literature. Josephus, who seeks to justify the length of life recorded in this chapter, takes care to state that "Hesiod, Hecatæus, Hellanicus, and Acusilaus, and beside them Ephorus and Nicolaus relate that the ancients lived a thousand years" (Jos. *Ant.* i. 3, 9).

The unhistorical character of this genealogy should be as freely admitted as that of the legends alluded to in the authorities cited by Josephus. We should be prepared to allow the presence of the same type of exaggeration in the Hebrew traditions as in those of other races. We cannot plead any exception in favour of the statements made here respecting the inordinate length of life assigned to the antediluvian Patriarchs. And it is worth while observing that, just as the Israelite and the Greek narratives pass from the stage of prehistoric tradition to that of national memoirs, so the span of life is reduced from that of fabulous length to that of normal duration. The antediluvian Patriarchs are credited with lives from 700 to 969 years;

the postdiluvians lived from 200 to 600 years (xi. 10-32); the Israelite Patriarchs lived from 100 to 200 years; in the days of the Israelite monarchy the length of life (Ps. xc. 10) did not differ from that which we now enjoy.

We cannot here enter into the question as to the meaning of the names of the Sethite Patriarchs, or as to their connexion with the Cainite Patriarchs. But it is interesting to notice that the numbers of the years mentioned in this chapter appear somewhat differently in the Samaritan and Septuagint versions. According to the Samaritan version, only 1307 years elapsed between the Creation of Man and the Flood; according to the Septuagint version, 2242 years. According to the Samaritan version, Jared was 62, not 162, when Enoch was born; Methuselah 67, not 187, when Lamech was born; Lamech 53, not 182, when Noah was born. According to the Septuagint version, Enoch was 190, not 90, when Kenan was born; Kenan 170, not 70, when Mahalalel was born; Mahalalel 165, not 65, when Jared was born; Enoch 165, not 65, when Methuselah was born.

According to the Samaritan numeration, Jared, Methuselah, and Lamech died in the year of the Flood. According to the Septuagint numeration, Methuselah outlived the Flood by fourteen years.

Although, as has already been pointed out, the genealogy gives us no account of the social or

moral condition of the Sethite Patriarchs, we are left to infer from the narrative of the Flood, and from the incidental mention of Enoch, that the human race became rapidly sunk in iniquity. The interest of readers of this chapter is naturally centred upon Enoch. His removal from earth is obviously not to be explained, as some have suggested, upon the theory of an early death. In Israelite literature, premature death was never regarded as a mark of Divine favour; and, if Enoch had thus died in early life, we should have expected the use of the same phrase, "And he died," which occurs in the mention of the other Patriarchs. The ordinary interpretation of the words, "He was not; for God took him," is certainly the correct one. "By faith," says the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, "Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and he was not found, because God translated him" (Heb. xi. 5, *cf.* Eccles. xliv. 16, xlix. 14).

In this mention of Enoch, we gain an assurance that, in the early traditions of Israel, a belief was current in the possibility of some other issue of life than mere physical dissolution. Such a belief was entertained in other Semitic races. The "apotheosis" of Hasisadra (Xisuthros), the Noah of the Babylonian inscriptions, has some points of correspondence with the translation of Enoch.

The Israelite narrative, in spite of its brevity,

leaves us in no doubt as to the cause of the especial mark of Divine favour towards Enoch. Not for his greatness, nor for his heroic deeds, nor for his beauty, for which causes the privilege of "apotheosis" was granted in the tales of Greek and other mythologies, but for the simple reason that "he walked with God," was he "taken." The Patriarch's walk with God passed for a proverb in the religious literature of Israel.

Only in the case of Enoch and Elijah is "translation" mentioned in Scripture. The walk with God, unto the end, even unto death, is the beaten path of His saints on earth. "To be with Christ" seemed to St. Paul to be far better; but even he was reserved to crown his witness by a martyr's death.

"THE SONS OF GOD AND THE DAUGHTERS OF MEN" (vi. 1-8).—The narrative of the Deluge is prefaced by a short description of the corruption of the inhabitants of the world. This passage is as remarkable for its general style as for its contents. It is unmistakably extracted from some very ancient source; and, on that account, has probably been here inserted by the compiler of the book. It gives, in greater detail, the same indictment of wickedness which is repeated in vers. 11, 12; but it is not without difficulty, on account of its startling reference to the marriages of "the sons of God" with the "daughters of men" (vers. 1-4).

Many have stumbled at the language here used. Occurring in the midst of a plain, straightforward narrative, no ground is offered for any but a simple and literal interpretation.

In favour of the explanation, which is sometimes put forward, that the verses only allude to the disastrous results of the intermarriage between the descendants of Seth and the descendants of Cain, nothing can be said to make it at all probable. It is incredible that the two families should suddenly be designated by the writer with these marked titles, without a word of explanation to guide the reader towards their right distinction. Again, we have no reason to suppose that the descendants of Seth were at all distinguished by their piety. Enoch "walked with God," and Noah "was a righteous man"; but, from the very language used in reference to these two Patriarchs, we might rather infer that they were virtuous exceptions. Why, then, should the Sethites be called the "sons of God"?

In the context of this particular section there is no mention of Sethites and Cainites; and it is the purest assumption to suppose that any contrast between the members of the two genealogies is here intended, when no hint or clue is given to the reader to assist towards their right identification.

Equally improbable is the Jewish explanation, which identified "the sons of God" with the nobles and men of the upper classes, and "the daughters of

men" with women of inferior rank and station. It is based on the use of "the sons of men" (*adam*), and the "sons of noble men" (*ish*), rightly rendered in the English Bible, "Both low and high" (Ps. xlix. 2); and it is illustrated by "Sons of the Most High. Nevertheless ye shall die like men (*adam*)" (Ps. lxxxii. 6, 7). But obviously such poetical usage is no safe key to the understanding of simple prose; and even if it were, while explaining "the daughters of men" (*B'noth adam*), it fails to give us a suitable parallel for the use of "the sons of God" in the sense of "the nobles." For, beyond all dispute, the occasional usage of such a phrase for the children of Israel, as the adopted family of God, affords no support to its technical application here, in the sense of "the upper classes."

We must, surely, adopt the simplest and most literal rendering. This is obtained from the usage of the expression "the sons of God" in other passages (Job. i. 6, ii. 1, xxxviii. 7; *cf.* Ps. xxix. 1, lxxxix. 6; Dan. iii. 25) where "angels" are clearly intended. Accepting that explanation for "the sons of God," we follow the analogy of the Hebrew passages where the same words occur, and we obtain the simplest and most natural antithesis to "the daughters of men."

What interpretation, then, does this solution afford us? Are we to suppose that angelic beings actually contracted marriage with terrestrial? That is the opinion of some.

It is preferable to regard the whole passage, which, as has been said, is undoubtedly an extract from some very ancient source, as a relic of an early Hebrew legend. In this legend, the marriages of the angels with the daughters of men were considered to account for the generation of giants, and to explain their daring and insolent confidence, as well as their exceeding sinfulness.

The suggestion has been made that the early legend from which the contents of these verses were borrowed, had no previous story of the Fall, and, accordingly, that the present narrative, in its full original form, may have been intended to account for the origin of evil, which was deemed to have arisen from the confusion of the angelic and the human races. In any case, it was not unnatural that later tradition derived from these verses the idea of the fall of the angels from their first estate.

We may observe that the passage opens abruptly, without any direct connexion with what has gone before, and that it is clearly marked off from what follows. The mention of the "Nephilim"[1] contains a reference to a race not elsewhere so designated. But, presumably, the name had previously been mentioned in the narrative from which the section was derived. Otherwise it is difficult to account for its occurrence here without any word of explanation.

While, of course, it is impossible to speak with

[1] Ver. 4. *See* R.V. *marg.*

any degree of certainty, there is some probability in the view, that vers. 1-3 epitomise a parallel, or alternative, version of the Fall. The temptation here comes from beings of a higher race; the entrance of sin and death is ascribed to the abandonment by "the daughters of men" of the position which God had allotted to them. Here, as in chap. iii., the woman as the weaker vessel yields to the temptation, and is the cause of sin and death prevailing among mankind.

The purpose of the insertion of the passage is obvious. It is to illustrate, from the earliest traditions, the current belief as to the enormity of the wickedness that prevailed in the prehistoric centuries. It is, indeed, coloured by primitive mythology: nor is this any loss. We are enabled thereby to see the method of the compiler. For while, as a rule, in the early chapters of Genesis, the more distinctly mythological elements are removed from the narratives by the scrupulous care of the Israelite writers, traces of their original shape and colouring are occasionally to be seen. But, perhaps, nowhere else does this appear so distinctly as in this short section.

# CHAPTER VII

## THE STORY OF THE FLOOD

### (vi. 9–ix. 17)

THIS narrative naturally excites more interest than any other of the early narratives in Genesis. The vividness of the description, the wonderful character of the overthrow, the touches of detail in the story, the similarity to other accounts of a cosmical Deluge preserved in the records of other nations, combine to attract to it universal attention.

On this account, probably, more has been said upon these chapters than upon any other section of the same length in the whole of Genesis. There is, therefore, the less need here to enter with minuteness into the account of the Flood. In the present chapter it will only be necessary to touch upon (1) the structure of the Biblical narrative, (2) the parallel to it presented in Assyro-Babylonian literature, (3) the historic character of the story; and then to supplement this treatment with a brief notice of the place occupied by the Flood in the religious teaching of Israel.

1. It is a fact now generally known, and universally recognised by all scholars, that the account of the Flood, preserved in the Book of Genesis, results from the combination of two slightly differing versions of the same story. The greater portion of the narrative has come down to us in the form in which it was preserved in the Priestly narrative. But large extracts from the Prophetic narrative, by the hand of the Jehovist, have also been retained, and their presence can be unmistakably recognised.

The two accounts are interwoven; but the distinctive features, both of their style and of their characteristic treatment, have enabled scholars to assign, with some confidence, the greater portion of the section, in its present literary state, to the one or the other document.

To the Priestly narrative are generally assigned chaps. vi. 9-22; vii. 6, 11, 13-16$^a$, 18-21, 24; viii. 1, 2$^a$, 3$^b$-5, 13$^a$, 14-19; ix. 1-17.

Characteristic of its style is the use of the Divine title "Elohim," and of the Hebrew phrases for "after their kind," vi. 20, *cf.* i. 25; "male and female," vi. 19, *cf.* i. 27; "these are the generations," vi. 9, *cf.* x. 1; "in the selfsame day," vii. 13, *cf.* xvii. 23, 26; "establish . . covenant," vi. 18, *cf.* ix. 9, 11, 17; "increase and multiply," viii. 17, *cf.* ix. 1, 7, etc.

It is in this narrative that we find the precise mention of Noah's age (vii. 5, 11), the exact dimen-

sions of the ark (vi. 15, 16), the depth of the Flood (vii. 20), and the covenant with Noah (ix.).

To the Prophetic narrative is assigned the greater part of vii. 1-5, 7-9, 10, 12, $16^b$, 17, 22, 23; viii. $2^b$, $3^a$, 6-12, $13^b$, 20-22.

Characteristic of its style is the use of the Divine name Jehovah (Jahveh), the use of the phrase "the male and his female" in vii. 2 (literally "the man and his wife"), quite different from that used in vi. 19, the term "house" applied to the family of Noah in vii. 1, the incident of the raven and the dove, and the most marked anthropomorphisms which occur throughout the story.

How completely separate the two accounts are will appear to the simplest reader in chapter vii., where we have two successive mentions of Noah entering the ark with his family and the animals, *i.e.* 7-9, and 13-16. The two documents containing the narrative undoubtedly were in general agreement. But they differed in certain points of detail, which the compiler, faithfully extracting from his authorities, made no attempt at reconciling completely. They are points, however, which have probably caught the attention of many a student, and have seemed hard to understand. It is a matter for real gratitude on the part of Christian readers that criticism has been able so satisfactorily to dispose of many of the little knots that made the thread of our narrative, in some places, difficult to unravel.

These points of unimportant divergence fall into three principal groups—(1) the number of the animals preserved, (2) the character and origin of the Flood, (3) its duration.

(1) As to the animals preserved in the ark, we find an interesting variation. The Prophetic, or Jehovist account, specifies seven of each of the clean, and two of each of the unclean animals (vii. 2). The thought underlying this distinction was that more of the clean animals would be brought into the ark than of the unclean, because Noah and his family might only obtain their food from the former. The distinction is interesting, if only because the division of animals into clean and unclean seems to have been very general among the Semitic races in Western Asia; and the Prophetic narrative may reflect the primitive tradition that survived from the prehistoric ancestors of Israel.

According to the Priestly account, on the other hand, the animals went in two by two. The lives of Noah and his family were not perhaps regarded as being sustained by animal food (ix. 3). For their sustenance special provision was to be made (vi. 21). The pairs of animals were admitted into the ark with the purpose of preserving their species upon the earth. The writer did not recognise the division into "clean" and "unclean" at that early period. The "Priestly" view of the Israelite history regarded such ceremonial distinction as having proceeded first

from the Sinaitic legislation. Modern inquiry into Semitic institutions has shown that the Israelites shared with neighbouring races particular rules as to what was permitted to be eaten and what was not. The Priestly narrator, in all probability, records the version of the tradition which had become current among the priests of Israel, one which was most in harmony with the strict ceremonialism that regarded all religious rules as dating from the period of the wanderings in the Sinaitic wilderness.

Similarly, the Prophetic narrative contains, while the Priestly omits, the account of Noah's altar and sacrifice in viii. 20-22. To the Priestly narrator it would appear incredible that altars should be built or sacrifices offered before the institution of the Levitical worship and ceremonial. Accordingly in chapter ix., to quote Canon Driver's words, "Noah receives permission to slaughter animals for food without any reference to sacrifice, notwithstanding the intimate connexion subsisting in early times between slaughtering and sacrifice."[1]

(2) The Flood is attributed in the two accounts to different physical causes. In the Prophetic narrative the Flood arises from the continuous downfall of rain (vii. 12, viii. $2^b$). In the Priestly narrative we find it is brought about as much by the breaking up of "the fountains of the earth" as by the opening of the windows of heaven (vii.

[1] *Introduction to O. T. Literature*, p. 134.

11, viii. $2^a$). Some great terrestrial commotion is thus implied.

(3) The most serious discrepancy of all relates to the duration of the Flood. In the Prophetic narrative, the whole period, occupied by the warning before the Flood, its prevalence, and its subsidence, comprised but sixty-eight days. There were seven days of warning before the rain fell (vii. 10); there were forty days and nights during which the tremendous rain was incessant (vii. 12, viii. 6); there were three periods, of seven days each, which marked the gradual absorption and final subsidence of the water (viii. 6-8, 10-12).

In the Priestly narrative, on the other hand, the duration of the whole Flood catastrophe exceeded a year. It began on the seventeenth day of the second month, and it was not until the twenty-seventh day of the second month in the following year that the waters had abated from the earth. While we are not told exactly how long a year was, there is no reason to doubt that the writer regarded it as of equal duration with a year in the Israelite calendar. And this natural supposition is confirmed by the statement that for 150 days the waters of the Flood continued to rise and increase (vii. 24, viii. 3).

The difference between the two narratives betokens a distinct literary origin; and, as has been mentioned above, evidence to the same effect is

forthcoming from the language in the corresponding portions.

2. It has been claimed that the tradition of the Deluge is to be met with, in one form or another, in every quarter of the globe. Certainly in Greek, Assyrian, Persian, Indian, and Scandinavian legends we find mention of a Deluge. More than that, if the sources of our information are correct, traditions of a similar event are forthcoming from the primitive religions of Mexico, of South America, and even of Southern Africa. In some of these cases the alleged points of correspondence with the Scriptural account require to be submitted to a more rigorously scientific test than has hitherto been possible. But, even making allowance for a certain amount of hasty generalisation, we may regard it as an established fact that Deluge traditions are extremely widely diffused, and that, in the comparative study of early religions, their discussion will supply a most interesting and important chapter, in which their relation to the narrative in Genesis will have to be duly considered.

But with that more general inquiry we are not here concerned. That which demands our attention is the Assyro-Babylonian account of the Flood, which in many of its features so closely resembles that of the Bible.

What was known as the "Chaldee" version of the Flood narrative was preserved, though doubtless in a somewhat fragmentary and imperfect form, by

extracts from the history of Berosus extant in the writings of Eusebius and Syncellus. According to this account, Xisuthros, the "Chaldean" Noah, was warned by Chronos, in a dream, of an approaching Deluge that should destroy all living things; and he was commanded to do two things. In the first place, he was to record in writing a history of the world, and to deposit it at a place called Sipara, which was sacred to the sun. In the second place, he was to construct a ship, 15 *stadia* long and 2 broad, into which he was to convey his family and his friends; he was then to replenish it with provisions, and to collect into it every kind of beast and bird. This was done; and the Flood came. When it ceased, Xisuthros sent out birds three times to discover whether the water had abated. On the first occasion they returned, having found neither food nor rest for the sole of their foot; on the second occasion they returned, but there was wet mud upon their feet; on the last occasion they came not back again. Xisuthros then removed part of the roof, and came forth with his family and the pilot, and offered a sacrifice to the gods. They were at once taken up into heaven. But the voice of Xisuthros was heard informing those who remained in the ship of the happy lot which he had received, and commanding them to leave Armenia, where the ship had landed, and to return to Babylon, and to recover the hidden records of Sipara.

Until the year 1872 it was very commonly supposed that the interesting Chaldean account, of which the foregoing gives the rough outline, had come down to us through channels into which had been imported from Jewish sources many characteristic features of the Biblical narrative. But this opinion was destined to be falsified by the translation of the cuneiform inscriptions. On the 3rd of December 1872, Mr. George Smith announced his discovery of the brick tablet which contained the Assyro-Babylonian account of the Deluge. This tablet was the eleventh in a series of twelve, which contained the so-called Izdubar legends; and, according to Sir H. Rawlinson's conjecture, the tablets corresponded to the months in the year, so that the eleventh tablet, containing the legend of the Flood, belonged to the eleventh month, whose patron-deity was the storm god Ramman. The form which this version of the legend takes is that of a narrative spoken by Hasisadra (or Xisuthros) to Izdubar.

The Flood is described as having been brought about by the gods Anu, Bel, Adar, and En-nugi. The god Ea instructed Hasisadra to prepare a ship in spite of the ridicule he would incur by its construction, and gave directions as to its size.

Hasisadra built a great ship like a dwelling-house, and covered it with bitumen within and without. He put within it all his treasures of

silver and gold and corn, and caused his slaves and concubines, his cattle and beasts of the field, to enter. The command came to enter into the ship and close the door. Hasisadra entered, closed the door, and handed over the care of the "palace" and all its goods to the pilot, Buzur-sadi-rabi. The Flood commenced: "The spirits of earth carried the flood; in their terribleness they sweep through the land; the deluge of Rimmon reaches unto heaven," etc. "In heaven the gods feared the flood, and sought a refuge; they ascended to the heaven of Anu. The gods, like a dog in his kennel, crouched down in a heap. Istar cries like a mother." For six days the wind, flood, and storm continued; on the seventh they abated. Destruction was to be seen everywhere; "like reeds the corpses floated." "I opened the window," says Hasisadra, "and the light smote upon my face; I stooped and sat down; I weep; over my face flow my tears." The ship grounded on Mount Nizir. On the seventh day afterwards, Hasisadra "sent forth a dove, and it left. The dove went and returned, and found no resting-place, and it came back." Again, he sent a swallow forth, and it went; but after going to and fro, it too returned. Then he sent a raven, and the raven "went and saw the carrion on the water, and it ate, it swam, it wandered away, it did not return." Then Hasisadra describes how he let forth the animals from

the ship; how he built an altar and offered sacrifice; and how the gods smelt the savour, and "gathered like flies over the sacrifices. Thereupon the great goddess, at her approach, lighted up the rainbow, which Anu had created according to his glory."

The god Bel was wroth at Hasisadra's escape, but was propitiated by Ea, who reasoned with him, saying, among other things, "Let the doer of sin bear his sin, and the doer of wickedness his wickedness. Let not the first prince be cut off, nor the faithful be destroyed. Instead of a flood, let lions increase, that men may be minished, or let a famine break out, or a plague." Then Bel hearkened, and gave his hand to Hasisadra and his wife, and joined himself to them in a covenant, and blessed them, and, raising them to be as gods, caused them to dwell afar off at the mouth of the rivers.[1]

The tablet containing this account belonged to the library of Assurbanipal (668-626), but fragments of other editions of the poem have been found, not only among the ruins of Nineveh, but also in Babylonia.[2] Accordingly, even if this particular tablet dated only from the seventh century B.C., there is no reason to doubt that the legend which it records is substantially the common form of the legend about

[1] *See* especially Schrader's *Cuneiform Inscriptions and the Old Testament*, vol. i. (Williams & Norgate), translated by Whitehouse.

[2] *See* Sayce's *Fresh Lights from the Ancient Monuments*, p. 33.

the Flood that had been current in Assyria and Babylonia for centuries.

It has been observed that, if we compare it with the two Deluge narratives of which the Biblical narrative is compounded, it shows a marked resemblance to the "Priestly" narrative, in its account of the preparation and construction of the ark, and in its mention of the rainbow and the covenant; but to the "Prophetic" or "Jehovistic" narrative, in its mention of the seven days, in the prominence given to the downpour of rain, in the thrice-repeated sending of the birds, and in the offering of the sacrifice.

But while both versions of the Hebrew narrative are thus in agreement with the Assyro-Babylonian upon certain points, the points of difference are equally striking. According to the Genesis account, the Flood is sent as a Divine punishment for the wickedness of the human race; it is Divine compassion which causes it to cease, and establishes the rainbow as the sign of a covenant with man that God will no more again destroy the world with water. According to the Assyro-Babylonian account, the Flood is sent upon the world by the caprice of the gods, especially of the god Bel; and although the idea of it as a punishment for sin is suffered to appear in the colloquy of Ea with Bel, attention is directed primarily to the arbitrary action of the gods; the Flood, too, is made to cease because

of the intercession of Ishtar, and the tears and terror of other deities. The vindictiveness of Bel towards Hasisadra and his wife, on account of their escape, changes rapidly, at the end of the narrative, to the extreme of benevolence towards them; instead of slaying them, he grants them the privilege of admission within the ranks of the immortals.

The difference between the Hebrew and the Assyro-Babylonian versions is therefore most clearly marked at the beginning and close of the narrative. It corresponds to the contrast between Hebrew and Assyrian religious thought, the one pure and monotheistic, the other superstitious and polytheistic. The Bible version may lack some of the poetical touches in the cuneiform. But its immense superiority is shown, not only by its freedom from the mythological element, but by its moral purpose, by its simple dignity, and by the purity of its religious tone.

To determine the exact relationship between the Hebrew and the Assyro-Babylonian narratives is not such an easy matter as some have supposed.

When Mr. George Smith's discovery was first announced, many who, in their first excitement, hailed it as a confirmation of the accuracy of the Genesis narrative, evidently hardly realised its exact bearing upon Biblical questions. For, on the one hand, the cuneiform account was thoroughly mytho-

logical in character; on the other hand, it was, in all probability, drawn from legends belonging to an antiquity earlier than the age of Abraham; and the significance of these facts was hardly appreciated by some. It was clear, of course, that the Assyro-Babylonian account was neither borrowed from nor expanded out of the Hebrew. For while it belongs to a class of legends that were current long before the time of Abraham, no one could suppose that Babylon and Nineveh were ever beholden to the Hebrew race for literary records dealing with primitive ages.

Again, there are not wanting eminent scholars who claim that the Hebrew version of the story of the Flood is based upon that which is contained in the cuneiform texts, and that the resemblance of our Genesis narrative to the cuneiform shows that the Jews became acquainted with the Assyro-Babylonian account during the exile in Babylon. With this theory, I confess, I find myself in complete disagreement.

(*a*) In the first place, the Jehovist narrative was current and well known long before the Captivity, and, in all probability, before the influence of Nineveh and Babylon had made itself felt in the history of Israel. There is no sufficient reason to warrant the view that the Priestly narrative has been derived from any but genuinely Hebrew tradition.

(*b*) In the second place, if the Hebrew was

derived from the Assyro-Babylonian account at so late a period as the time of the Exile, it is difficult to account for the variations in the narrative which immediately occur to the reader's mind. Thus, why should the Hebrew version omit the mention of the swallow, and all reference to the pilot, while it gives so much more of detail respecting the entrance of the animals into the ark, and concerning the family of Noah?

(*c*) Lastly, the improbability that the Jews would derive from the religion of their captors materials for the purpose of supplementing their own sacred history, although it has been remarked upon in previous chapters,[1] may once more be adduced as an argument of importance. The pious Jews of the Exile found little at Babylon to tempt them to syncretism in religion; nor can it be said that there is any proved case of an instance in which the Jewish scribes amplified their national traditions by borrowing directly from those of Babylon. In regard to the narrative of the Flood, the express allusions to it in Isaiah liv. 9, Ezekiel xiv. 14, sufficiently confirm the general independence of the Israelite version as embodying the traditions of the Hebrew nation, without giving the slightest sign of being affected by Babylonian influence.

Admitting, therefore, the independence of the two narratives, the Hebrew and the Assyro-Baby-

[1] *See* pp. 22, 36.

lonian, in the literary form in which they have come down to us, how do we explain their obvious resemblance? The explanation is to be found in their common origin. Both the Hebrew and the Assyro-Babylonian traditions are derived from a primitive and prehistoric Semitic original. The Hebrew ancestors of the people of Israel were members of the same stock as the founders of the great empires on the Euphrates, and received from yet earlier ages the traditions of the past.

The different forms under which the same tradition is presented to us, in the different literatures, reflect the changes which time and religious belief have wrought upon their common inheritance. Despite the variations in points of detail, the identity of the two narratives is indisputable. But while the Assyro-Babylonian narrative reproduces the character of the mythology which marked the religious thought of the great world-empires of the Euphrates valley, the Hebrew narrative has come to us stripped of every trace of the old idolatry. The Israelite writers transmit it to us in the form which most perfectly expresses the pure religion of those to whom Jehovah revealed Himself. They do not cut themselves adrift from the past. They preserve the tradition of their fathers, adapting its form, as time goes on, to the needs of that higher religious standpoint which they were privileged to occupy.

3. It would argue want of candour not to consider frankly at this point the historic character of the narrative which describes so tremendous a calamity. And, on the threshold of such an inquiry, we have to deal with the fact that science speaks in no hesitating language upon the subject. There is no indication that, since man appeared upon the earth, any universal and simultaneous inundation of so extraordinary a character as to overwhelm the highest mountain peaks has ever occurred. So vast an accumulation of water all over the terrestrial globe would be in itself a physical impossibility. None, at any rate, has taken place in the geological period to which our race belongs.

The language relating the catastrophe is that of an ancient legend describing a prehistoric event. It must be judged as such. Allowance must be made, both for the exaggeration of poetical description and for the influence of oral tradition during generations, if not centuries, before the beginnings of Hebrew literature.

Perhaps the best solution of many obvious difficulties which the narrative suggests, is supplied by the recollection of the limited horizon which bounded the world of those ancestors of Israel from whom the primitive tradition was derived. To them the world was the valley of the Euphrates and the Tigris, and the highest hills were the mountains that skirted its

north-eastern and eastern sides. The Israelites of a later age had a more extended view; but even to them the area of the world was, if judged by our notions, strangely limited, since the ethnography of Genesis x. seemed to include all the races of mankind.

In the name of Ararat which occurs in the Hebrew narrative, and in that of Nizir which occurs in the Assyro-Babylonian, we have either an attempt to transliterate the names employed in the primitive tradition, or an instance of the tendency to substitute a well-known proper name for one that was unknown.

According to this line of explanation, the narrative of the Flood records to us some terrible but local cataclysm which overtook the original seat of the Semitic race. The Hebrew and Assyro-Babylonian accounts are two parallel versions of it, transmitted, by the two strangely different branches of that stock, in literature so varied as the clay-tablets of Nineveh and the Scriptures of the Jews. There seems to be no reason whatever to call in question the historic character of the event which the Semitic tradition commemorated. To deny that the Deluge ever occurred, because the traditions which describe it have come down to us with certain variations, is an attitude which, I am aware, has been taken up by some who would desire, above all things, to weigh the evidence candidly; but it is one which it is very hard to appreciate. The very variety of the tradition

seems to increase the probability of its historic character in the main points upon which there is agreement.

But if the Flood of Genesis were a local catastrophe and not universal, how are we to account for the ubiquity of the legend? That, it seems to me, is a question which we had best leave the historians of primitive civilisation to answer. While it is not improbable that the similarity of legends testifies, in a great measure, to the radiation of nations from a common geographical centre, we must remember that to primitive races inundations were the commonest and most destructive visitation. This would account for a Deluge playing a part in the legends of different parts of the globe, where the influence of Semitic races never penetrated. But there is no reason to doubt that the Semitic tradition became widely known, and is answerable for many points of resemblance in the legends of races quite unconnected with the Semitic stock.

In this, as in the other sections of the early portion of Genesis, we are in constant danger of suffering our interest and attention to be absorbed in the form rather than in the teaching of the narrative. But the purpose for which it is recorded is obviously not merely to preserve the memory of a great event, but rather to employ the record of that great event with the hope of impressing upon the people of Israel

the fundamental truths of their religion, which could thus be so signally illustrated.

Every reader is doubtless conscious, in some degree, of entertaining this thought. But it will probably strike him more forcibly in the light of the comparison between the Hebrew and Assyro-Babylonian narratives of the Flood. He cannot fail to observe the contrast between the cuneiform picture of the deities, some angry, some interceding, some frightened, some summoning the storm, others fleeing from it; and the Hebrew picture of the God of heaven and earth, who alone inflicts the calamity as a punishment, alone abates it, and alone is the deliverer of Noah and his family. He cannot fail to contrast the "apotheosis" of Hasisadra with the covenant made with all mankind, the whimsicalness of Bel towards individuals with the purpose of love towards the world.

But over and above the teaching of such an obvious contrast, the Hebrew narrative threw light upon a further group of ideas. It emphasised the fact of the judicial character of the overthrow; it laid stress upon the departure of the human race from their appointed path; it sketched, in the tremendous scene of overthrow, the first judgment, the first declaration, so often repeated to Israel, that the history of the race, even in its disasters, fulfils and corresponds to the decrees of the Almighty. It illustrated the principle of salvation, destined to be expanded in the history of the Jews. Noah is the

first "righteous" man (Gen. vi. 9); his righteousness is evidenced by the faith which trusted in the Divine promise. His faith, avowed in the construction of the ark, was a condemnation to an unbelieving world; it received its reward in the deliverance which redounded to those of Noah's household (Heb. xi. 7; 1 Pet. iii. 20; *cf.* Ezek. xiv. 14, Ecclus. xliv. 17).

ix. 1-17. *The sign of the rainbow.*—The story of the Flood closes with the covenant of Noah and the sign of the rainbow. Here, as in the covenants with Abraham and with Moses, the description is drawn from the Priestly writing, whose characteristic style can easily be discerned.

Noah is the representative of a new epoch. God grants to him a new covenant, while He declares His blessing upon man, and extends man's dominion over the animal world. Hitherto, according to this account, man had been a vegetarian (*cf.* Gen. i. 30 with vii. 19, ix. 3). Now, however, permission is granted him to eat the flesh of animals. And, in connexion with this extension of privilege, two binding enactments are laid down. By the first, man is forbidden to eat of the blood along with the flesh. According to the second, the death of the manslayer is required of his fellow-men. In these rules we recognise the requirements of universal primitive custom in the East. The former was to be repeated

in the Mosaic legislation; the latter, the law of blood-revenge, when re-enacted, was to be restricted within the limits of a more civilised existence.[1]

The covenant relation is established not with the descendants of Shem only, but with all mankind. Its pledge, the sign or symbol of hope, is correspondingly universal.

The rainbow had, of course, been visible upon earth, ever since the sun had shone and the rain had fallen, in remote ages long before man had appeared. Only those who are quite ignorant of the laws of "light" can now suppose that the appearance of the "rainbow" was posterior to the creation of man. Accordingly, the apparent mention of the formation of the rainbow, in ix. 13-17, has sometimes caused perplexity to candid and fair-minded readers. There are, it seems to me, two possible courses of explanation open to us.—(1) In the first place, it is possible to say that the passage, which incorporates an ancient tradition, reflects the prevalent ignorance of physical science. The language here used will then express the popular, but erroneous, Hebrew explanation of the phenomena of the rainbow, which supposed it to have been first miraculously *created* after the catastrophe of the Deluge. But it is noticeable that the word employed is not *bara*, "create," but *nāthan*, "give," "set," or "appoint." (2) In the second place, it is possible to see in the words of verse 13, "I do

[1] *Cf.* Num. xxxv. 6; Deut. xix.; Jos. xx.

set" or "I have set," not the fiat of *creation*, but the declaration of Divine *appointment*. The rainbow had existed before. Henceforward, it was to be endowed with a new significance as the sign or symbol of mercy. God "set" one of the most beautiful and yet most frequent phenomena in the natural world to be the sacrament of the new covenant. The same word occurs in Genesis i. 17: "And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth." And very probably the best solution of the difficulty is to be found in this use of the word.

At the same time, the two explanations are perfectly compatible with one another. The fact that the rainbow was appointed as the pledge of the Noachic covenant does not exclude the idea suggested by the whole passage, that, according to an ancient Hebrew tradition, the rainbow was also actually made in the days of Noah. The narrative which possibly embodies this popular but quite unscientific belief, was not incorporated in the Hebrew compilation for the purpose of teaching science, but for the purpose of instructing men in the things which concern their spiritual welfare, their hope of salvation, and their trust in Divine Mercy.

# CHAPTER VIII

## THE ORIGIN OF NATIONS

### *Noah as the Vine-dresser and his three Sons*

Genesis ix. 18-29

In the short section which follows the narrative of the Flood, is related the prophetic declaration of the Patriarch Noah concerning the future destiny of the races that were to spring from his three sons.

The description of Noah as the first vine-dresser recalls the style of iv. 17-24; and the incident, it will be observed, has no direct connexion with the narrative of the Flood. It is, therefore, not impossible that what is here related (vers. 20-27) was drawn by the Jehovist from a distinct source of ancient Israelite tradition, and was connected by him with the Deluge section by means of vers. 18 and 19. The suggestion is worth remembering in view of the well-known difficulty, in the present passage, occasioned by the fact that the curse is pronounced, not upon Ham, but upon Canaan.

The theory has been advanced (1) that, in one

Israelite form of the tradition, the three sons of Noah were Shem, *Canaan*, and Japheth; (2) that it was Canaan who treated his father with contumely, and therefore received his father's curse; (3) that the compiler of the book, on appending this narrative to the story of the Flood, harmonised it with what had gone before by the insertion of the words "Ham the father of" before "Canaan," in ver. 22, and by the explanatory gloss "and Ham is the father of Canaan," in ver. 18. This explanation, bold as it appears, deserves consideration. It accounts for the sudden mention of Canaan's name in vers. 18 and 22; it satisfactorily accounts for the curse being pronounced upon Canaan in ver. 25; it explains the abruptness which marks the introduction of the whole incident.

The more usual explanation is that the prophetic glance, which could see in Shem the chosen race of Israel, saw also in Ham the Canaanites that were to be Israel's foes; and that Ham, who shamed his father, received the curse in the prediction of the shameful destiny of his own youngest son. But we should expect that, if the curse were pronounced upon Canaan as the typical son of wrath, the blessing would also have been prophetically pronounced upon some typical son of grace. The difficulty at once disappears if vers. 20-27 represent a separate stratum of Israelite tradition in which Canaan was a son of Noah, and if the parenthetical words in vers. 18 and

20 reflect an endeavour, on the part of the compiler, to harmonise this tradition with that which has already appeared in the story of the Flood.

It is a sad reflection, that the words of the curse pronounced upon Canaan (ver. 27) were only a century ago quoted in justification of negro slavery. Literalism must indeed have been tyrannous, when men who recognised that slavery was a curse could justify it on the ground of the Patriarch's prediction, and were even found ready to associate themselves with its actual infliction. Modern interpretation is exposed to perils of quite a different class.

No candid exegesis of the oracle of Noah would now permit us to harmonise his words with modern scientific conceptions as to the distribution of races. It has now for a long time been well known and generally recognised, that the old and simple plan of assigning the population of Asia to the descendants of Shem, that of Africa to the descendants of Ham, and that of Europe to the descendants of Japheth, is utterly unscientific; it fails in nearly every respect to satisfy the complex problems presented by the history of language and the descent of nations.

Even in recent times, scholars have too rashly sought to trace the fulfilment of the curse upon Canaan in events of Greek and Roman history, which, if disastrous to Hamitic races, were equally so to the kindred of Israel, *e.g.* the Phœnicians and the Carthaginians, the Syrians and the Assyrians.

We should do wisely not to read into this section of Scripture the discoveries of modern ethnological science. Probably, the most reasonable line of interpretation is that which will consistently decline to expand, by a process of mere conjecture, the range of this prophetic oracle beyond the circle of those races which were known to the early Israelite people (see chap. x.).

To their restricted view, Ham (or Canaan) represented especially the heathen who dwelt on the borders of the Promised Land, whom Israel had but partially dispossessed; Japheth represented the nations at a greater distance, of whom but little was known.

The thought of the mission of Israel to the world supplies the key to the utterance of Noah. The curse of Canaan is the curse pronounced against Israel's greatest foe and constant source of moral temptation; the shamelessness of Ham reflects the impression produced, by the sensuality of the Canaanite, upon the minds of the worshippers of Jehovah. The blessing of Shem is bound up with the family of Israel, who alone worshipped the one true God, Jehovah. The blessing of Japheth is made dependent on the connexion of the northern races with the Hebrews, and on their peaceful relations with Israel: "He shall dwell in the tents of Shem." Israel's blessing granted by Jehovah shall be dispersed, by the instrumentality of the other nations,

throughout the world. It is in reality a Messianic forecast. It is a proclamation of the blessing which, through the line of Israel, is assured to them that are "afar off," as well as to them that are nigh.

## *The Table of the Nations*

### Chapter x.

The Israelite compiler follows a clearly indicated plan. His immediate goal is the history of the chosen family. Before he can reach that point, it is needful he should account for the rise of the other nations. After a brief but comprehensive survey, he will notice the line of the descendants of Shem (chap. xi.); then, still more narrowly restricting this area, he will devote himself to the traditions of the family of Terah (xi. 27-32, xii.-l.).

Wearisome as the list of names will seem to many a reader of the chapter, it is the more necessary for us to recognise its place and its true religious significance in the Hebrew Scriptures. It reminded the Israelites that God made of one blood all the nations of the earth, and that the heathen, who knew not Jehovah, were nevertheless brethren of Israel. It reminded him that his own nation was only one among the nations of the earth, by origin and descent in no way separated from them, but, only by the grace of God, selected and chosen to be the bearer of His revelation to the world. Thus

the genealogies of Japheth and Ham are duly recorded before the genealogy of Shem; and the branches of Nahor's family are mentioned before the history of Terah's son, Abraham, begins (xi. 27-32).

The nations, it will be observed, are presented to us *genealogically*. But the genealogical relationship of nations is not to be understood literally. The terms of genealogy express, pictorially, the ethnology of prehistoric times. The names are very rarely the names of individuals. In some cases, possibly, the name of a nation or tribe was derived from some famous individual, warrior or chieftain. But these are apparently exceptional. In some cases the plural termination "*—im*" shows that not an individual, but a whole community, is denoted, *e.g.* Kittim (ver. 4), Dodanim, Ludim (ver. 14). In others the name is strictly geographical: thus Mizraim (vers. 6,13), with its dual termination "*—aim*," denotes Upper and Lower Mazor or Egypt; Sidon is "a fishing place" (ver. 15); Canaan denotes the "lowlands" or maritime plain of Palestine (vers. 6, 15).

If, then, the genealogical terms are to be treated metaphorically, it will not, perhaps, appear evident, at first sight, upon what principle the various races have been distributed among the three sons of Noah. According to one theory, it is a distribution by colour, Shem answering to the Assyrian *samu* or "olive coloured," Ham to *khammu* or "burned black,"

Japheth to *ippah* or "white." But a glance at the list suffices to show that this hypothesis breaks down. Others have sought for a solution in a division according to three main families of speech; but it is sufficient condemnation of this view to point out that, while the Hebrews and the Syrians are assigned to Shem, the Phœnicians and the Sidonians are assigned to Ham.

The ethnology of prehistoric times must not be confounded with modern scientific conceptions of ethnology. It preserves the primitive traditions—traditions of immense value and interest to the historian—respecting the origin of races and nations. In a great measure, however, these traditions more accurately represent prevalent opinions as to the geographical distribution of the races than actual facts as to their origin and descent.

By far the most probable explanation is that the Table of the Nations presents a classification based, not upon any scientific principle, but roughly upon geographical situation. The descendants of Shem occupy a central position, the Hamites lie chiefly on the south, the Japhethites on the north. Slight exceptions are admitted in deference to special traditions. But, generally, the Table represents the geographical knowledge of the Israelite. Into the identification of the various names, we have not space to enter here; but the reader will do well to refer to Professor Sayce's chapter upon the subject

in *The Races of the Old Testament* (Religious Tract Society). The Table ranges from Armenia in the north to Ethiopia in the south; it extends from Greece (Elisha) and the mysterious Tarshish (? Tartessus) in the west to the country of Elam, beyond Babylonia, in the east.

It will probably have struck an observant reader that the names of Edom, of Moab, of Ammon, so closely bound up with the history of Israel, have no place here. In the Hebrew tradition their origin is associated with a later, the patriarchal or nomadic, period of Israelite history. On the other hand, it is worth while noticing that no mention is here made of the aboriginal inhabitants of Palestine, the Anakim, Rephaim, Emim, Horim, Zamzummim.[1] They must have disappeared from the land long before the tradition on which this register is based took its shape. Similarly the absence of the names of Persia and Arabia has been claimed by some to indicate a pre-exilic date for the construction of the Table.

The mention of Nimrod (vers. 8-12) deserves something more than the passing notice which is all we can here bestow upon it. According to the Hebrew tradition, Nimrod was the founder of the kingdom of Nineveh, and went forth from Babylon to build Nineveh. The Assyrian records, so far as they throw light upon the subject, correspond in

[1] *Cf.* Deut. ii. 10-12, 20.

an interesting manner with this tradition. That Nineveh was founded from Babylon appears to be a thoroughly established fact. The further discovery that the earliest known rulers of Assyria were sprung from a non-Semitic race is thought to agree with the mention in this passage of Nimrod's Cushite origin. But the meaning of Cush is disputed. According to some, the name denotes Ethiopian influence; according to others, Arabian. Again, other scholars see in it the Cossæan dynasty of the early Babylonian empire.

Nimrod's name has yet to be discovered in the Inscriptions. The identification of Nimrod with Izdubar (Gilgamesh), an old Accadian divinity, rests on too precarious a foundation to warrant us in putting any confidence in it as yet. But the Nimrod section has undoubtedly been derived by the Jehovist narrator from traditions based on the earliest recollections of the Hebrew race.[1]

## *The Tower of Babel*

### Chapter xi. 1-9

This strange narrative is probably also derived from the records of the Jehovist. It preserves a tradition which goes back to very early times. The purpose of it was obviously to account for the two

[1] Since the above was written, a letter on "Nimrod and the Assyrian Inscriptions" by Professor Sayce has appeared in *The Academy*, 16th July 1892.

great phenomena of human society—(1) the distinction of races, and (2) the diversity of language. How these originated must have seemed one of the greatest mysteries to the men of the ancient world. It was clear that while variety of speech constituted the greatest bar to free intercourse, it was also the most constant source of conflict. Given the original unity of the human race, the problem was how to account for the differences which had arisen to divide the children of men so completely and so permanently.

On the other hand, it was easy to perceive that if the original inhabitants of the earth could be supposed to have kept together, there was nothing to account either for the wide spread of the population or for the origin of different languages.

The familiar story of the Tower of Babel supplied to such primitive questionings an answer suited to the comprehension of a primitive time. But in the language of the popular tradition we must not look for the teaching of modern science. It should be enough for us that the Hebrew version of the narrative emphasises the supremacy of the One God over all the inhabitants of the world, and ascribes to His wisdom that distribution into languages and nations which secured the dissemination of mankind over the continents, and necessitated the conception of co-operation for the practice of industry and for the protection of life and property.

The legendary character of the narrative was not altogether removed by the Israelite compiler who gave it its present place in the great historical work. Evidence of this is found in the derivation of the name Babel (the ordinary Hebrew title for Babylon, *cf.* x. 10) from a Hebrew word employed to denote the confusion of tongues. Now it is well known that the native Babylonian word for Babylon, "*Bab-ilu*," which Babel transliterates, is compounded of two words, "*Bab*" and "*Ilu*," and means "the Gate of God." The Hebrew legend, seizing upon the similarity in the sound of this word to the Hebrew word "*balbel*," "to confound, mix together" derived the name of the Babylonian capital from its "punning" resemblance to this latter word. Whether the *Babylonian* interpretation or pronunciation gives the correct derivation, we cannot perhaps say for certain. But that the *Hebrew* derivation given in this narrative is a mere play upon the name is certain; and that it is accountable for the form of the tradition in the Israelite narrative is exceedingly probable.

A trace also of the early Hebrew mythology, from which, as a general rule, the Israelite historians so completely purged the primitive traditions of the nation, probably survives in the use of the first person plural in the words "Let us go down," which, in ver. 7, are put in the mouth of Jehovah (*cf.* i. 26).

As the Tower called by this name was evidently connected in Hebrew tradition with Babylon, we should expect that the origin of the legend is to be traced to some remarkable structure or to the gigantic ruins of an ancient building, either within the walls or in the vicinity of Babylon. Scholars are divided in opinion as to whether the building which gave rise to the story was the celebrated Tower of Birs-Nimrud at Borsippa which stands at a little distance south-west from Babylon, on the west bank of the Euphrates, or the great Temple of Merodach within Babylon itself, which Nebuchadnezzar mentions that he found in a dilapidated condition, and restored to great splendour and magnificence. Travellers, struck by the enormous size of the Birs-Nimrud mound, have generally inclined to the former alternative. But the name of the Tower, the Tower of Babylon, favours the view that it was the Temple in Babylon itself. And we know that this Temple was erected in prehistoric times; its earliest name was Accadian, "*Bit-Saggatu*," "the house of the lofty summit"; it was frequently restored by Babylonian kings; it was the principal shrine in Babylon. Its situation, its size, and its great antiquity favour the supposition that it was the structure around which grew up the story of Babel. No legend answering to that of the Tower of Babel has yet been found in the cuneiform records; but such a tradition may natu-

rally have arisen among the dwellers in Babylonia, and have been transported thence by the ancestors of Israel.

Whichever of the two ruins is to be identified with the Tower of Babel is a matter of comparatively small moment. But it may be observed that, in both cases, the structures were built of brick, both rose out of the plain of Shinar, both probably were built in seven successive stages or terraces, the pinnacle or highest point being occupied by the sanctuary.

Just as the Greek fable told of the giants who strove to scale the heights of Olympus, so the Semitic legend told of the impious act by which the sons of men sought to raise themselves to the dwelling-place of God, and erect an enduring symbol of human unity to be seen from every side.

It should be noticed that, in the words of ver. 2, "they journeyed," the subject of the verb is perfectly indefinite. It does not appear clear who are referred to. There is no allusion to the sons of Noah, or to the members of any one family. The abruptness with which the narrative is thus introduced, and the absence of any reference to Noah and his sons, lead us to suppose that the tradition was derived from some source independent of the Deluge narrative. Possibly the allusion, both here (ver. 2) and in x. 11, to "the land of Shinar" is an

indication that the Jehovist narrator is drawing from a tradition which had been current in the Sumerian (Shinar) district—the southern portion—of Mesopotamia, and which the ancestors of the Hebrew race had brought with them from their sojourn in that region.

The old belief that Hebrew was the original language, and that the family of Shem alone preserved it, has long been shattered by the science of Philology. There is no need now to go over such familiar ground as the evidence to show that Hebrew is only one of the branches of the great Semitic family of languages, to be classed with Phœnician, Assyrian, Arabic, and Aramaic.

The story of the Tower of Babel and the confusion of tongues attempts to account in a pictorial manner for the diversity of speech. No one would ever think now of accepting it as a scientific explanation. It preserves the Hebrew version of a legend which connected the origin of difference in speech with the mystery that enveloped the history of a marvellous and gigantic sacred tower. If it assumed that Hebrew was the primæval language, it did but resemble the traditions which, in other races, made for other languages a similar claim.

But beneath the story lies clearly discernible its religious significance. Once more, the element of evil asserts itself in the self-exaltation of man against his Maker, the seeking of his own glory

("let us make us a name," ver. 4) rather than Jehovah's will. Once more, the Israelite narrative shows that the way of Jehovah's punishment is fraught with mercy. If the sentence on the soil had necessitated the blessings of human industry, so here the decree of the separation into races provided for the dispersion of civilising influences into different quarters of the globe. Above all, it declares that rebellion against God is the true source of discord. The gift of Pentecost, as the Fathers saw, is the true converse to the story of the Tower of Babel. The true unity of the race, made known in Christ,[1] is confirmed by the utterance of the Spirit which is heard by all alike. The believer "journeys" not away from God's presence, but draws nigh to Him by faith.

## *The Genealogy of the Shemites*

### Chapter xi. 10-26

We pass again to the writing of the Priestly narrative. The change from the narrative to the genealogy, so strangely abrupt, illustrates once again the structure of a compilatory work.

The genealogy here is confined to the descendants of Shem. It corresponds to the genealogy in chap. v. For, while that genealogy bridged over the period

[1] *Cf.* Col. iii. 11.

between the Creation and the Flood, this one bridges over the period between the Flood and the calling of Abraham. Its purpose, therefore, is to effect the transition from the history of the world to the history of the chosen people.

The strictly historical character of this genealogy cannot be maintained. (1) The period of 365 years between the Flood and the calling of Abraham is much too brief to allow for the development of the races, and for the growth of civilisation, which appear in the patriarchal age. Egypt and Babylon, as we know from their inscriptions, had enjoyed a highly-developed civilisation for many centuries before the time of Abraham. (2) The subsequent Patriarchal narrative in no way favours the idea that, at the time of Abraham's calling, the Shemite forefathers, including Shem himself, were most of them alive (xi. 11) ; yet, if the figures given in this chapter were literally correct, this consequence would have to be admitted.

The duration of life in chap. xi. occupies an intermediate position between the ages of the antediluvian Patriarchs and the ages of the Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Shem lived 600 years, Arpachsad 465, Shela 465, Eber 464, Peleg 239, Reu 239, Serug 230, Nahor 148. In the duration of Nahor's life, we may observe a transition to the more historical period of the nomad Patriarchs.

The Septuagint, probably recognising the difficulty

caused by the short interval between the Flood and the call of Abraham, raises it from 365 to 1245 years; the figures in the Samaritan version bring it to 1015. But it cannot be doubted that, in both instances, the variation from the Hebrew text has been made intentionally, with the view of rendering the narrative more probable, and of removing the difficulty mentioned above.

The genealogy of Shem brings us to the threshold of the Patriarchal period. It introduces us to the history of the Terah family from which the nation sprang. We pass out of the region of those traditions which, presumably, the Israelites shared, in some degree, with other branches of the Semitic stock.

In bringing to a conclusion these slight and fragmentary contributions to the understanding of a most important section of the Old Testament, I need add but a few words. My endeavour has been to discuss the contents of Gen. i.-xi. in the light of modern science and of modern criticism. If I have failed to do so with the reverence due to Holy Scripture, I most humbly express regret for a fault I have striven especially to avoid.

In these eleven chapters are recorded the popular and unscientific narratives which, in early Hebrew tradition, conveyed pictorially the prevalent conceptions as to the origin of the Universe and the

foundations of human society. Inspiration did not *infuse* into the mind of a writer accurate scientific knowledge of things unknown. But the Israelite writer, gifted by the Holy Spirit, was overruled to draw, here from one source and there from another, the materials for a consecutive account, which, while it embodied the fulness and variety of Hebrew tradition, was itself the appointed medium of Divine instruction.

If we look for perfection of scientific teaching, whether of geology and astronomy, or of history, ethnology, and philology, we shall inevitably be disappointed. Earthly learning is not the subject of Divine Revelation. But if we look for spiritual teaching, our search will be amply rewarded. Here, no less than in the other narrative portions of Scripture, the Word is powerful, not so much because of the facts which it records, but because of the instruction which it is the means of conveying to our hearts, spiritual instruction, even "things necessary to salvation."

The literature of Holy Scripture differs not widely in its outward *form* from other literature. In its prehistoric traditions the Israelite literature shares many of the characteristic features of the earliest legends which the literature of other nations has preserved.

What though the contents of these chapters are conveyed in the form of unhistorical tradition!

The infirmity of their origin and structure only enhances, by contrast, the majesty of their sacred mission. In a dispensation where every stage of Hebrew thought and literature ministers to the unfolding of the purpose of the Most High, not even that earliest stage was omitted, which to human judgment seems most full of weakness. Saint and seer shaped the recollections which they had inherited from a forgotten past, until legend too, as well as chronicle and prophecy and psalm, became the channel for the communication of eternal truths.

The poetry of primitive tradition enfolds the message of the Divine Spirit. Criticism can analyse its literary structure; science can lay bare the defectiveness of its knowledge. But neither in the recognition of the composite character of its writing, nor in the discernment of the childish standard of its science, is there any reproach conveyed. For, as always is the case, the instrument of Divine Revelation partakes of limitations inalienable from the age in which it is granted. The more closely we are enabled to scan the human framework, the more reverently shall we acknowledge the presence of the Spirit that pervades it.

Frankly to accept the teaching of science, and the results of criticism, is no concession to scepticism on the part of the Christian student; it is but a step forward in the recognition of God's way of making

known His will to man. That such a step is not incompatible with the loyal and reverent treatment of Holy Scripture, I have endeavoured, even at the risk of wearying my readers, to make plain at each stage in the course of the discussion which I now conclude.

It is my prayerful hope that at least the tone and spirit in which these chapters have been conceived, if not the actual line of thought which has been pursued, may be welcome to some who have wished to see the claims of science and criticism combined with the reverent interpretation of "The Early Narratives of Genesis."

THE END

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